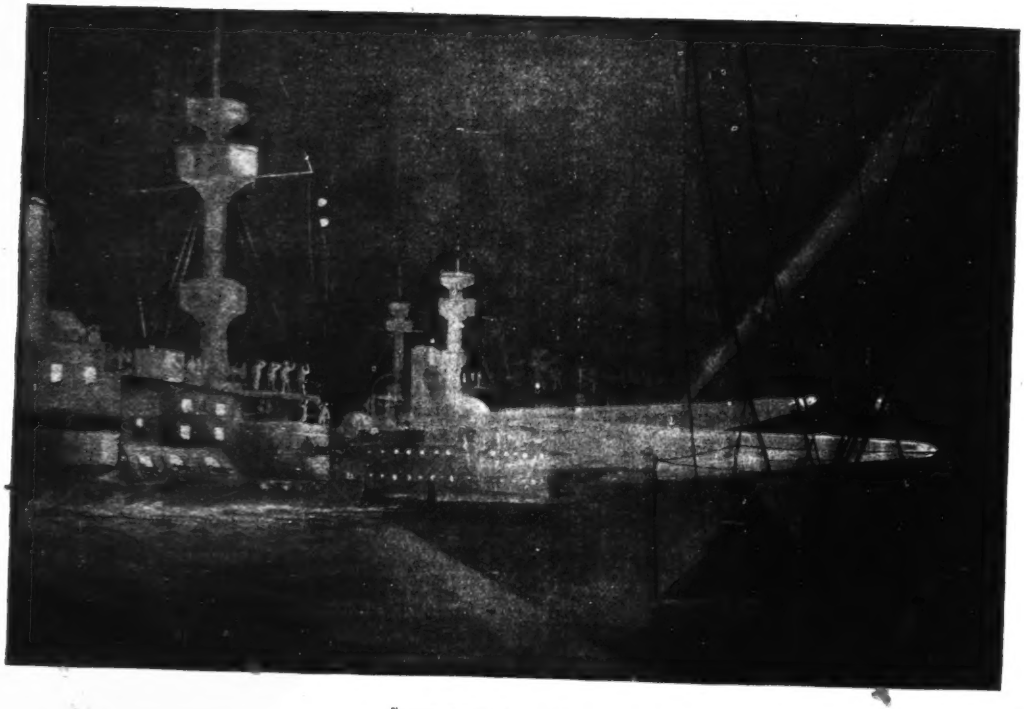
THE CAPTAIN OF THE "MARY ROSE"



"THEY WERE ALL A MASS OF LIGHTS.

See page 35.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE "MARY ROSE"

A Tale of To-morrow

BY

W. LAIRD CLOWES

UNITED STATES NAVAL INSTITUTE

ILLUSTRATED BY THE CHEVALIER EDOUARDO DE MARTINO AND FRED T. JANE

SEVENTH EDITION

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1898

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UTOPIA
ESR

To

REAR-ADMIRAL

JOHN ARBUTHNOT FISHER, C.B.

ONE OF THE LORDS COMMISSIONERS OF THE ADMIRALTY

AND

CONTROLLER OF THE NAVY

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

IN REMEMBRANCE OF

TWO PORTSMOUTH LUNCHEON PARTIES,

(AUGUST 19TH AND 25TH, 1891)

EACH OF WHICH WAS ENLIVENED BY A KIND HOST'S WIT

CONTENTS.

PAGE

CHAPTER I.

A Bolt from the Blue 1

CHAPTER II.

The Battle off Toulon 25

CHAPTER III.

Some Staggering Blows 65

CHAPTER IV.

A Letter of Marque 105

CHAPTER V.

The Attack on the Rock 135

CHAPTER VI.

The Sailing of the "Mary Rose" 164

CHAPTER VII.

The Forcing of the Straits 192

CHAPTER VIII.

The Chase to Malta 227

CHAPTER IX.

A "Glorious First of June" 258

CHAPTER X.

"Home and Beauty" 300

ILLUSTRATIONS.

From Drawings by the CHEVALIER EDOUARDO DE MARTINO and FRED T. JANE.

	PAGE
"They were all a mass of lights" (*see page* 35) . .	*Frontispiece*
"Even some obsolete gunboats"	9
"Masthead electric lights of novel design are being fitted to some of the larger battleships"	13
"Was only a steam yacht"	19
"Certain craft were ordered to use their search-lights in combination"	29
"A number of French ships were coming out"	33
"Suddenly a ship near the centre of the French line began to use her search-lights"	37
"The effect of the light when it shines in the eyes of the spectator is confusing"	41
"It is impossible to guess how far off the projector is" . .	45
"A torpedo hit us on the port bow"	49
"By the enemy's terrible fire"	53
"Remember what they will say at home"	57
"The *Alexandra* has also arrived"	61
"The Channel Fleet has been ordered home"	67
"Ships were taking in powder and shell"	71
"A couple of first-class torpedo boats were sent out" . .	75
"Every vessel opened in the direction of the foe" . .	79
"They rendered all the other craft of the enemy invisible" .	83
"It was fearful work; the very silence of the grey boats made the scene the more impressive"	87
"The blowing up of the *Minotaur*"	91
"The attack on the *Hercules*"	95
"May I never live to have another so awful experience" .	99

"A torpedo exploded under her own port quarter" . . 103
"The *Bellona* ashore" 107
"Whose steam launch narrowly escaped being run down" . 111
"The Fleet at Spithead" 115
The letter of marque *Valdivia* (afterwards *Mary Rose*) . . 121
Deck plan of the *Valdivia* 129
"Off the Rock" 139
"They opened a furious fire 143
"All night long the bombardment continued" . . . 147
No. 70 153
"I have done it!" 159
The *Mary Rose* escorted out of the Tyne 171
"The foretop over which peeped the covered muzzle of a gun" . 177
"Give her the bow 9·4-in. gun" 185
The *Mary Rose* and prizes entering Plymouth Sound . . 189
Coaling off the Wadi Gloug 197
"Steaming with his coal" 201
"Ordered the starboard 9·4-in. gun to be fired" . . . 207
"It was impossible to distinguish the order in which the French Fleet was steaming" 217
Mary Rose torpedoing an ironclad 223
"Suspicious-looking objects were creeping up . . . 241
"It was short, quick, terrible work" 245
"Their white bow waves betrayed them" 249
"Suddenly a rocket shot up" 253
"The *Troude* was warily coming up" 259
"On board the *Cécille* a perfectly awful state of affairs was found" 263
The *Cristoforo Colombo* 275
"In the days of sailing ships" 279
An Atlantic greyhound 283
"Gib" 287
The *Royal Sovereign* 291
"I had the misfortune to lose the *Dreadnought*" . . . 295
A "glorious first of June" 301

PREFACE.

TO every Briton, the question, "What will the sea-fighting of to-morrow be like?" is of supreme interest and importance. Ours is a sea empire. The confines of our dominions lie, not upon our own coasts, but upon the coasts of our neighbours; and unless in the future we can, as we have done in the past, hold our dominions, be they shore or be they ocean, against all comers, our national glory will be eclipsed, our wealth will vanish, and our greatness will be annihilated.

It is primarily in order to put forward a tentative answer to this question that I have written the story of the *Mary Rose*. I have seen no real fighting at sea. There are very few who have. But I have seen an immense amount of sham-fighting—more, it is possible, than anyone else; for, besides witnessing manœuvres abroad, I have for eight successive years gone afloat to follow the operations consequent upon the annual mobilisation in our own home waters. The sham thing, I am quite aware, must be very different from the terrible reality. It affords, nevertheless, a key to the reality; and, armed with that key, I have been so bold as to endeavour to open the

future. Similar endeavours have been made before. In conjunction with my friend, Commander Charles Napier Robinson, R.N., I myself made the endeavour in 1886, when Messrs. Hatchards re-published for us, from the pages of the *St. James's Gazette*, "The Great Naval War of 1887." Not long afterwards another friend, Mr. H. O. Arnold-Forster, now M.P. for West Belfast, contributed to a monthly magazine his excellent forecast called "In a Conning Tower; or, How I took H.M.S. *Majestic* into Action," and last year he re-published it. Last year, also, appeared "The Last Great Naval War: An Historical Retrospect," by "A. Nelson Seaforth," whom, I shrewdly suspect, I have the pleasure of knowing under a name which, in the Navy, is closely identified with lamps, signals, speeches at the Royal United Service Institution, and letters to *The Times*. Other endeavours I need not particularly allude to. The present one is intended to differ from its predecessors in being less technical, and in paying attention to some aspects of naval warfare that have been neglected by all the rest. These aspects, I venture to hope, will especially recommend themselves to British boys. If they will take an intelligent interest in modern naval developments, we shall not, twenty or thirty years hence, have to lament that upon naval questions the tax-paying public is ignorant or apathetic; for not only the boy is the father of the man, but also the study of matters naval is so seductive that, I believe, no Englishman who has once taken it up has ever willingly relinquished it.

My first aim, then, has been to give a readable tentative

answer to the question: "What will the sea-fighting of to-morrow be like?"

My second has been to call attention to our position in the Mediterranean. We maintain there a large Fleet of fine ships, and it is our duty to do so; because we are a Mediterranean Power of the first rank; because, while we are paramount in the Mediterranean, we are, to a far greater extent than is commonly realised, the peace-keepers of Europe; and because our paramount position in the waters of the Mediterranean is essential to the preservation of most valuable material interests, which, if we once lost them, we might never be able to regain. And so we maintain a large Mediterranean Fleet. But "large" is, after all, only a comparative term. France has at her immediate disposal a far larger one in the same sea, and unless we keep our naval strength in the Mediterranean, as elsewhere, superior to that of France, our only dangerous naval rival, we imperil our position. The ships which are mentioned in the story are all existing ships. The Mediterranean ships mentioned are practically the existing Mediterranean Fleets.

In writing as I have written, I have been animated by no unfriendly and by no unfair feeling towards France. I have represented French officers as being fully as scientific and brave as their British "opposite numbers," and I have never represented a Frenchman as doing a thing which, if done by an Englishman, would shame him. In the past, when we have been enemies, we have, I trust, been honest and cordial ones. I am sure that, in the future, if fate should unhappily make us opponents, we shall not be less

loyal foes than we were ninety years ago, and that afterwards we shall not diminish our respect one for the other.

I am most fortunate in having had, in this work, the co-operation of my friend, that most distinguished of marine painters, the Chevalier Edouardo de Martino. He volunteered to illustrate what I should write; and to receive such an offer from so admirable an artist was, of course, to gladly accept it. When, as he and I believed, we had completed our labour, he was called to South America. The editor of *The Engineer* was then so good as to think that the story of the *Mary Rose* might be welcome to the readers of his paper. He wished, however, to have additional illustrations, and these were in due time supplied by Mr. F. T. Jane, a young artist who has already made his mark in this particular branch of black and white drawing. While the story was being published in *The Engineer*, Mr. Jane offered to prepare a number of further illustrations, and these, now printed for the first time, will, I think, be found among the most effective of his contributions. To the proprietors of *The Engineer*, for their permission to use Mr. Jane's first series of illustrations, and for the facilities which they have placed in my way, I tender my grateful thanks.

New Travellers' Club,
Piccadilly,
November, 1892.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE "MARY ROSE."

CHAPTER I.

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE.

N the morning of Tuesday, April 28th 189—, the publication in London of the following Reuter's telegram created no small amount of uneasiness and excitement in commercial as well as in political circles. The telegram was dated, "Toulon, Monday Evening," and it was thus worded:—

"This afternoon a bluejacket, belonging to the British Mediterranean Fleet, which arrived here yesterday, got into an altercation in a *café* with a French seaman. Other sailors, British and French, who were present, took sides; the argument assumed the dimensions of a quarrel; blows were freely exchanged; and the British bluejackets were at last driven into the street, and thence to their boats. In the course of the disturbance some revolver and rifle shots

were fired, it is believed by the Frenchmen, and, unfortunately, there seems to have been bloodshed, and possibly loss of life. Owing, however, to the excited attitude of the local population, to the extreme reticence of the police, and to the fact that a military cordon has been drawn round the scene of the outbreak, it is as yet impossible to obtain any trustworthy particulars. The Maritime Prefect at once went on board the British flagship *Victoria*. It is supposed that his object was to offer or to ask for explanations; but, upon his return to the shore, no public announcement was made, and nothing definite is therefore known. The situation, without being serious, may at any moment become so. The local authorities are in brisk telegraphic communication with Paris."

This telegram was, in itself, alarming; but the gravity of its import was increased a thousandfold by an announcement which followed it in the columns of the *Times*.

"The above news," said that journal, "is, so far as we can learn, the latest that has been received from France. It reached the *Times* office shortly after eight o'clock last evening. We at once took steps to obtain further particulars. We were, however, informed that between half-past seven and half-past eight telegraphic communication with France had been totally interrupted, and that all the Channel cables, as well as the Irish cable from Havre to Waterville, had ceased to work. There is reason, therefore, to fear that the Toulon affair is of graver importance than

Reuter's agent seems to have suspected when he sent off his dispatch. Up to the hour of going to press, no further intelligence bearing upon the matter has reached us. We hope, however, to receive further news in the course of the night by way of Belgium or Holland, communication with those countries being still open. A copy of Reuter's telegram was, immediately after the arrival of the message, posted up in all the clubs, and exhibited in the windows of several newspaper offices in Fleet Street. The news caused much speculation and excitement, and, for the remainder of the evening, formed everywhere the sole topic of conversation. It is a subject for congratulation that Parliament is sitting, and that all the Ministers are in town. In the Commons, as will be seen on reference to our Parliamentary report, the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs rose at nine o'clock, and, apologising for interrupting the senior member for Northampton, who at the moment was speaking in support of the motion for the appointment of a Royal Commission on International Arbitration, read the telegram to the House, which listened in hushed silence. In reply to several questions, the right honourable gentleman stated that he had no further information, and that he trusted that, until further news should be forthcoming, the House and the country would, in deference to the susceptibilities of a friendly Power, refrain from demonstrations of any kind. He hoped that the affair would have no serious results; and he had every confidence, he said, that the French

Government would act in the matter with absolute fairness. In answer to a question as to the alleged interruption of telegraphic communication, he replied that he had no information. At a late hour all the Ministers met in informal conclave in the Prime Minister's room in the House of Lords. They had not separated when we went to press, and nothing, therefore, is known of the upshot of their deliberations. But in the lobbies, and among private members, the fact of the interruption of communications was definitely substantiated soon after ten o'clock, and it naturally excited much alarm. There is very little doubt that the cables have been deliberately cut; though a few sanguine people assert that the non-receipt of further news is due entirely to the effects of the storm which raged during the evening, and which, pitiless as it was, failed to disperse the crowds that thronged the neighbourhood of St. Stephen's in anxious expectation of hearing that some additional Ministerial announcement had been made. The behaviour of the people was strikingly quiet and orderly. Strong feeling was, of course, general, but, for the most part, its exhibition was suppressed. That there were very few noisy demonstrations or patriotic harangues in the streets, may, however, be partially attributed to the effect of the rain, which fell in torrents.

"Upon inquiring at midnight at the French Embassy at Albert Gate, we were assured that no information as to the Toulon affair had been officially received.

"For the satisfaction of those who may be ignorant on the subject, we give below the strength of that portion of the Mediterranean Fleet which anchored off Toulon on Sunday afternoon.

		Tons.	H.P.	Guns.	Men.
Battleship, 1st class—	*Camperdown*...	10,600	11,500	10	526
,, ,,	*Sanspareil*.....	10,470	14,000	15	587
,, ,,	*Collingwood*....	9,500	9,570	10	459
,, 2nd class—	*Colossus*.....	9,420	7,500	9	325
,, ,,	*Dreadnought*...	10,820	8,210	4	440
,, ,,	*Edinburgh*.....	9,420	7,500	9	445
,, 1st class—	*Nile*.....	11,940	12,000	10	500
,, 2nd class—	*Inflexible*.....	11,880	8,010	12	460
,, 1st class—	*Benbow*.....	10,600	11,860	12	500
,, ,,	*Trafalgar*.....	11,940	12,000	10	500
,, ,,	*Victoria*.....	10,470	14,000	15	500
Belted cruiser—	*Australia*.....	5,600	8,500	12	460
,,	*Undaunted*.....	5,600	8,500	12	460
Torpedo ram—	*Polyphemus*....	2,640	5,520	—	132
Cruiser, 3rd class—	*Fearless*.....	1,580	3,300	4	140
,,	*Scout*.....	1,580	3,200	4	140
Dispatch vessel—	*Surprise*.....	1,650	3,030	4	93

"The rest of the Mediterranean Fleet consists exclusively of unarmoured cruisers and light vessels, and is composed of H.M. ships *Amphion*, *Dolphin*, *Cockatrice*, *Gannet*, *Hecla*, *Imogene*, *Landrail*, *Melita*, *Phaeton*, and *Sandfly*, with one or two stationary vessels. Several are in the Levant or the Red Sea, and none are nearer to Toulon than Malta or Gibraltar. Of the French ships at Toulon we have at present no particular information. We know, however, that there

are at least twelve ironclads ready for, or actually in, commission, several powerful cruisers, and a considerable number of torpedo boats, both large and small."

In a leading article on the Toulon affair, the *Times* advised its readers to suspend the formation of opinion until further news should be received; to abstain from any demonstrations which might make worse a state of things that was already sufficiently grave; and loyally to support the Government in whatever measures it might deem itself called upon to adopt. Much the same advice was given by all the other London morning papers, not one of which, it should be added, contained any more detailed news than appeared in the *Times*.

And, upon the whole, the advice was faithfully acted upon throughout that Tuesday of anxiety and agitation. A few roughs raised insulting shouts outside the French Embassy, and some truculent individuals broke a window there with stones; but in each case the police promptly interfered, and took the offenders into custody. No more news reached London until shortly before midday; but the early editions of all the evening papers contained the following telegram, which had been received by way of Brussels and the Middelkerke-Ramsgate cable:—

"Advices from Toulon report that, shortly after nine o'clock last night, the British Mediterranean Fleet, consisting of eleven battleships, two belted cruisers, and four other vessels, quitted its anchorage off that port. A French squa-

dron hastily put to sea at about the same time. The object of these movements is unknown, and in consequence, the most alarming rumours are current. Toulon is in a state of great excitement, and bodies of men patrol the streets singing patriotic songs. Several British bluejackets were killed in yesterday's affray. The authorities refuse to give any information; but it is known here that last evening at a late hour all the submarine cables connecting the British Islands with France were cut by order of the French Government. All messages that cross the Franco-Belgian frontier are now jealously scrutinised, and several have been stopped."

During the day, with very brief intervals between them, many still more alarming telegrams poured in. The more important of them are quoted below:—

"OSTEND, Tuesday, 12.15 p.m.—The British Ambassador to the French Republic has suddenly arrived here. Late last night he was roused from his bed and ordered to quit Paris at two hours' notice; and he was subsequently conducted by an armed escort to the Belgian frontier. He leaves at once by special steamer for England. The French Toulon Fleet, it is rumoured, put to sea yesterday evening, with orders to prevent the British Fleet from leaving until full satisfaction should be given for the alleged murders by British sailors during yesterday's riots. It is also rumoured that, in defiance of the Maritime Prefect's order to the contrary, the British Admiral has quitted his anchorage. The situation is regarded as most serious; and the dismissal of the Ambassador clearly

points to a rupture. French troops are being rapidly concentrated at Cherbourg, Brest, Lorient, Dunquerque, and other coast towns; and it is whispered that, as a precautionary measure, a Belgian army corps is to be mobilised and is to occupy the frontier. Numerous British refugees from France have already reached this place."

"DOVER, Tuesday, 12.38 p.m.—The passenger steamer *Victoria* started this morning as usual for Calais. When she was at a distance of about two miles from the French coast, a French gunboat hailed her and informed her captain that communication between England and France is forbidden, pending the issue of further directions from Paris. The *Victoria* had, therefore, no alternative but to return. Two other passenger steamers have been similarly treated. The excitement here is intense."

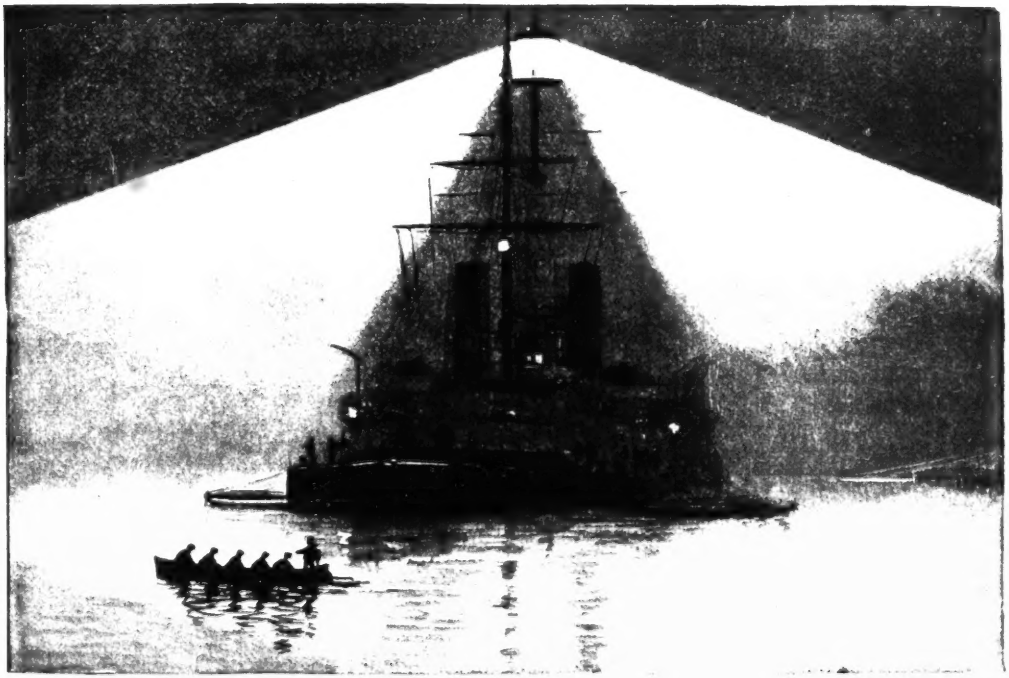
"BRUSSELS, Tuesday, 1.50 p.m.—The French Government last night sent to the Admiral at Toulon orders which, if they be acted upon, can only bring about immediate war between France and Great Britain. The orders were to prevent, at all hazards, the British Fleet from putting to sea so long as the serious questions which were raised by yesterday's riot should remain unsettled. The exact nature of these questions lies in some obscurity. The prospect of war is said to have already provoked unbounded enthusiasm in Paris."

"FLUSHING, Tuesday, 3.20 p.m.—It is reported that the formal declaration by France of war with Great Britain is only a question of hours; and it is believed that this pre-

cipitancy is due to the conviction which is entertained in French Government circles that England is just now very ill-prepared, particularly in the Mediterranean; and that France, by striking a sudden and unexpected blow, may produce results such as she could scarcely hope to attain, if ample time were allowed her adversary for the making of complete preparations. In the meantime the French army is mobilising."

"Portsmouth, Tuesday, 3.30 p.m.—Orders have just been received here for the immediate commissioning of every ship in harbour that can, by any exertion on the part of the dockyard officials, be made ready for the pennant, and for the hurried preparation of all the rest, not excluding several old vessels that have recently been advertised as 'For Sale,' or even some obsolete gunboats. Similar orders have been telegraphed to each of the naval ports. The dockyard, where, until to-day, work was slacker than it has been since the departure of the ships for last year's Naval Manœuvres, is already the scene of feverish activity. The coastguard ironclads have been directed to assemble with all haste at Spithead, and not to wait for their full complements, but to leave their respective ports as soon as they can get up steam. Some of them are expected to-morrow. The Naval Commander-in-Chief is now concerting with the General in command of the Southern District elaborate measures for the defence, by means of mines, booms, and picket-boats, of the port and of the anchorage at Spithead, and to-night the carrying out of their plans will be begun. Masthead electric lights of novel

design are being fitted to some of the larger battleships. These are so arranged as to shed a zone of illumination all around the vessel, but to leave the craft herself in comparative darkness, and it is confidently expected that they will be of great value should our squadrons be obliged to anchor at night within raiding distance of the enemy's torpedo boats. Some experienced officers, however, are of opinion that a ship which desires to remain exempt from attack should on no account exhibit a light of this kind, since it must of necessity be visible from a considerable distance to the foe; and they do not hesitate to say that, even if they be supplied with it, they will not use it. The advantage of the light lies in the fact that no ship, so long as she employs it, can possibly be closely approached by any enemy that does not to a very dangerous extent expose himself. On the other hand, it is pointed out that the apparatus is large, and offers so fine a mark for machine-gun fire, that it could doubtless be easily extinguished by moderately good gunners at 3000 yards, or even more. Experts here are loud in their regrets that this device, which is quite new, has not, together with other electric lighting devices which are much older, been properly experimented with in peace time, and that, in consequence, no certainty exists as to either its practical utility or its vulnerability. Unfortunately there are symptoms of the existence of a certain degree of friction between the naval and military authorities; nor can this be wondered at when it is remembered by how vague and arbitrary a line their respective functions are



"MASTHEAD ELECTRIC LIGHTS OF NOVEL DESIGN ARE BEING FITTED TO SOME OF THE LARGER BATTLESHIPS."

divided. The feeling here is strongly to the effect that all the defences on the sea-front should be unreservedly entrusted to the Navy and Royal Marines. On the other hand, there is an undoubted lack of both officers and men even for the manning of the vessels which are to be commissioned. So great, indeed, is the scarcity of stokers, seamen-gunners, and signalmen, that only by calling out all the reserves can even the immediate necessities of the situation be supplied. It is not certain, however, that the reserves will be of much use, seeing that the engines of modern men-of-war greatly differ, as a rule, from those of merchant vessels; that few men of the Royal Naval Reserve have any practical familiarity with heavy breech-loading guns; and that hardly any men, outside the service proper, are qualified as signalmen. There is also a scarcity of lieutenants, and a good many small craft will, if commissioned at all, apparently have to be commanded by gunners, carpenters, and boatswains. As for the local permanent defences, they are very imperfect. Many of the works on the land side have no guns at all, and the re-arming of Southsea Castle and the Spithead forts has not yet been completed. War is here regarded as as good as declared. No one, and least of all naval men, can look forward to it with anything like light-heartedness, and many Portsmouth people regard the prospect with distinct apprehension, and propose to leave the town as soon as they can conveniently do so; yet the naval and military population here shows an admirable spirit, and numbers of retired officers of both

services are offering their assistance to the Government."

"BRUSSELS, Tuesday, 5.8 p.m.—There are grave reports from the South. It is said that a conflict of some nature has actually taken place between the British and French Fleets off Toulon, but no details of any kind are given. There is also serious news from Paris. A declaration of war is undoubtedly by this time on its way to London. It was to have been dispatched at noon. The French capital is violently excited, and extremely enthusiastic. Very little news reaches this city, and that little slips through the fingers of very jealous French censors, dozens of whom must be employed along the frontier."

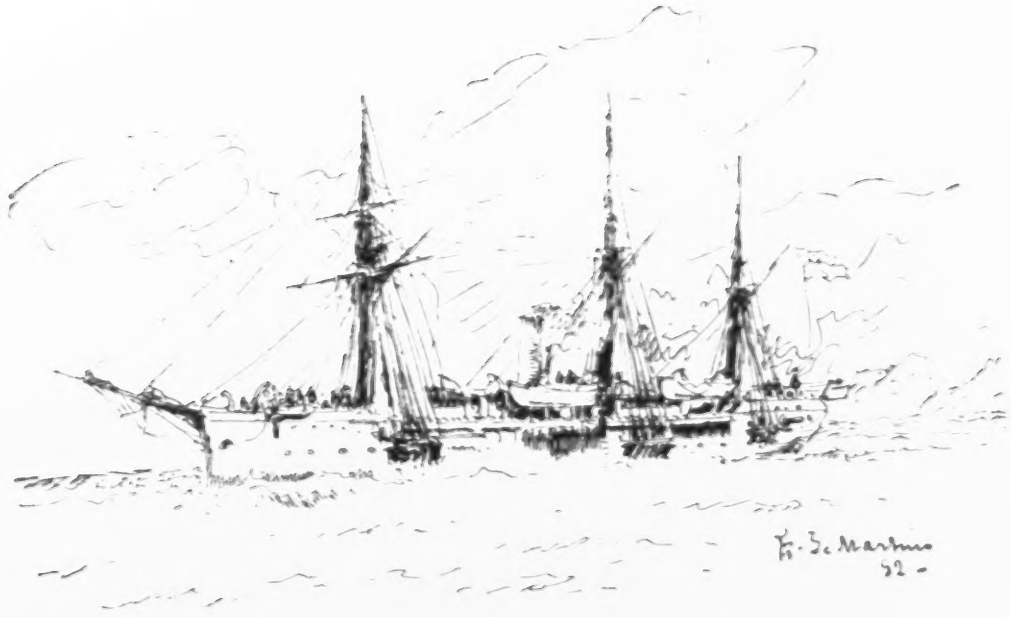
"BARCELONA, Tuesday, 5.20 p.m.—The Italian steamer *Monte Pulciano*, which arrived here this afternoon, reports that very late last night, when off Toulon, she heard the sound of heavy firing, and saw in the sky the reflections of what seemed to be explosions on a very large scale. She did not, however, call at any French port, and so brings no definite intelligence."

"GENOA, Tuesday, 6 p.m.—The news of difficulties having suddenly arisen at Toulon had scarcely reached this place ere rumours began to arrive to the effect that the French Admiral had received orders from Paris to destroy the British Fleet in case it should attempt to quit Toulon Roads. No one credited this report at first, but it must now be admitted that corroborative evidence of a kind is not lacking. A correspondent

at Hyères telegraphs that much heavy firing took place late last night off that town, but, apparently, at a great distance out at sea, and that to-day some French men-of-war, which seemed to be somewhat damaged, re-entered Toulon. All messages from France are subjected to strict censorship, in consequence of the strained relations between that country and Great Britain. Too much reliance must not, therefore, be placed upon the trustworthiness of this news."

Then came the most unambiguous telegram of the eventful day.

"Dover, Tuesday, 6.20 p.m.—A French torpedo boat named the *Lance* has just entered the harbour under a flag of truce. The lieutenant in command of her brought dispatches which have already been sent on by train to the French Ambassador in London. Their purport is, however, no secret. They contain an announcement to the effect that the British Admiral having refused to consider the legitimate demand of the authorities at Toulon for apology and reparation in the matter of yesterday's riot, and having, in defiance of French orders to the contrary, quitted Toulon Roads while the grievances of the French Government remained unredressed, the French Republic recalls its Ambassador and declares war against Great Britain. The French lieutenant, who was of course not allowed to land, departed as soon as he had communicated with the coastguard boat which went out to meet him. The civil population is apprehensive lest the town may be shelled to-night. Steam is being got up to work the turret on the


F. E. Martinez
92 -

Admiralty pier; and the men are to sleep beside their guns both there and in the various batteries on the heights. Stringent measures are to be adopted to preclude all possibility of a *coup de main*; and no vessels will in future be allowed to enter or leave the port until they have been searched. Very few people here are likely to sleep much to-night. Numbers of nervous folk are going inland without even waiting to pack up their effects. A large French man-of-war is now visible in the Strait, but her name is not known. It is hoped that she may be brought to action by the *Audacious* from Hull, the *Hotspur* from Harwich, or the *Iron Duke* from the Forth; for all these ships have been ordered to rendezvous at Spithead, and one or more of them is expected to pass Dover to-night. Here there is not so much as a gunboat; but it is believed that, at the latest, by Friday, some of the coast-defence ironclads will be assembled in the Downs, where, in case of need, they will be within easy reach of this most important position. No lights are to be shown to-night, and the windows of even private houses are ordered to be darkened. Pickets are to go round to enforce this rule. The town is already, in fact, though not in name, in a state of siege; and so long as hostilities last, it must be a prey to continual and very harassing alarms, if to nothing worse."

A later telegram explained that "the large French man-of-war" which had excited Dover was only a steam yacht.

These were not the only telegrams that brought the country to a quick realisation of the fearful suddenness with which

she had fallen into a state of war with her nearest neighbour and most powerful maritime rival. There were many others, but the effect of all was the same. They startled England, not only with the definite news of imminent hostilities, but also with the vague report, which was far more terrible, that some paralysing blow had already been dealt against the Power which, for three centuries at least, had prided herself upon being mistress of the seas. The nature and result of that mysterious blow were alike unknown; but lack of knowledge, fed by apprehension, often produces strange popular impressions; and the very absence of definite news from the Mediterranean Fleet was, at such a juncture, almost by itself sufficient to create very wild alarm.

The excitement in London increased, therefore, as the day wore on. The House met early, but the Ministers were able to say little that was encouraging. They were prepared, in case of necessity, to maintain the honour of the Sovereign and of the Empire; they had adopted such measures as prudence and the counsel of the most experienced officers suggested, and as their immediately available resources rendered possible; and they were, until late in the afternoon, not altogether hopeless that peace might still be preserved; but they had only the most meagre information to give: they were unable to inspire the public with that confidence which they professed to feel; and worst of all, they had absolutely no intelligence concerning the Mediterranean Fleet save that it had left Toulon on Monday night.

In the afternoon crowds gathered in Trafalgar Square and other public places; and, in spite of the efforts that were made by the police to disperse the people, addresses—treasonable as well as patriotic—were delivered by persons who, whether they were loyal or not, would in the circumstances have more wisely kept their mouths shut. Most of the theatres opened as usual; and those which opened were thronged, for the temperament of the population at the moment required that men should congregate in any place where the latest news was likely to be obtainable. But no attention seemed anywhere to be paid to the performance. People loitered in the passages and foyers, and talked or listened with tongues and ears devoted to one topic only. As the successive editions of the evening papers came out, copies were brought in and handed round, and struggled for even by the musicians in the orchestra. Twenty-four hours previously, war had seemed the most improbable of catastrophes. It was now practically certain, and what its end might be no one could foretell. At the Lyceum Theatre "Macbeth" was being played. Towards the conclusion of the first act the curtain was suddenly lowered, and the familiar figure of Mr Irving immediately appeared before it.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the great actor, who was much moved, "news of a very grave character has this moment reached the theatre; and I deem it my duty to interrupt the performance in order to communicate it to you. I regret to have to say that, according to a telegram

which I hold in my hand, the British Fleet in the Mediterranean was yesterday attacked by a French Fleet of superior force, and was very severely handled. There are, unfortunately, no details. I trust that the news is not really so grave as it at present sounds; but even if it be untrue that war has actually broken out, and that our brave bluejackets have already been surprised by anything in the remotest degree resembling disaster, I feel that I shall only, in the circumstances, be forestalling your wishes, when I announce that the performance cannot continue. Ladies and gentlemen, it is not for me, standing before you in this dress, to say much; but this I must say: the opportunity seems to have arisen for us to show that we are still the sons of our fathers. This, you will agree with me, we may do, not merely by volunteering or otherwise directly contributing towards the defence of our country; but also by lending a steadfast and loyal moral support to her most gracious Majesty's Ministers in this moment of terrible anxiety and public danger. England, facing her enemies, has always hitherto been as one man. Let us see to it that she be one man now. Let us banish all divisions; let us think not of ourselves but of our country; and, believe me, though the path through this difficulty may be dark and terrible, we shall emerge into the light."

The earlier part of this brief address was listened to almost in silence. The latter part provoked first low expressions of approval and then cheers. When Mr. Irving had concluded

the audience, as with one accord, stood up bareheaded; and, as the orchestra played the first note or two of the National Anthem, there began a scene of indescribably contagious enthusiasm. People leapt upon the seats and waved hats or handkerchiefs; women burst into tears; and there was a confused babel of sounds which, in a few moments, blended into the noble and solemn chorus of "God save the Queen."

CHAPTER II.

THE BATTLE OFF TOULON.

HAT, then, had happened off Toulon?

The *Times* of Wednesday morning was the first newspaper to give anything like a full account of the affair. This it did in the following painful telegram:—

"San Remo, Tuesday Night.—I have just been landed here, thanks to the courtesy of the commander of the Italian dispatch vessel *Agostino Barberigo*, and, with much grief, I telegraph to inform you of the sudden and terrible disaster which early this morning overtook the Mediterranean Fleet. That Fleet, as your readers will see on referring to any of the service papers of last week, consisted of the battleships *Camperdown*, *Nile*, *Collingwood*, *Colossus*, *Dreadnought*, *Edinburgh*, *Benbow*, *Inflexible*, *Sansparcil*, *Trafalgar*—flag of the Rear-Admiral—and *Victoria*—flag of the Commander-in-Chief. On Sunday afternoon these vessels, together with the belted cruisers *Australia* and *Undaunted*, the armoured ram *Polyphemus*, and the unarmoured craft *Fearless*, *Scout*, and *Surprise*, anchored off Toulon, and found the French Mediterranean Fleet lying there also. This squadron,

which had come in earlier in the day after a cruise, consisted of the battleships *Amiral Baudin*, *Courbet*, *Dévastation*, *Formidable*, *Duguesclin*, *Hoche*, *Marceau*, *Vauban*, *Caïman*, *Bayard*, *Neptune*, and *Indomptable*, with the cruisers *Cosmao*, *Troude*, and *Lalande*, the torpedo dispatch vessels *Vautour*, and *Condor*, and the torpedo gunboats *Dragonne*, *Dague*, *Aventurier*, *Kabyle*, *Audacieux*, *Ouragan*, and *Téméraire*. Up the harbour, in addition, lay the battleships *Trident*, *Colbert*, *Terrible*, *Redoutable*, and five other ironclads, all belonging to the 'Escadre de Reserve,' which has been newly constituted. There were also up harbour several cruisers and torpedo vessels.

"We exchanged salutes in the usual way; the Admirals called on one another; and yesterday after dinner about four hundred of our bluejackets were allowed to go ashore. I was, at the time, on board the *Benbow*, and can give, therefore, only a hearsay account of what occurred in the town.

"It appears that at about four o'clock in the afternoon some of our men, who were drinking in a wine-shop, got into an altercation over the merits of the two navies with several French seamen belonging to the *Colbert*. The Frenchmen boasted that their ships were in every way superior to ours; Jack strongly objected; from words the disputants went to blows; and, in less time than it takes to write it, our fellows were retreating down the street, pursued by a mixed crowd of French soldiers, sailors, and civilians. Reports vary as to the

damage done, but it is, unfortunately, certain that at least a dozen of our men lost their lives, and that the French loss was nearly as severe.

"We, of course, lay too far out to be able to hear or see anything of the hubbub on shore. The first hint of what occurred came to us from the ship's chaplain, who, returning on board in a shore boat, reported that a row was going on in the town. I went up into the top, whence through the glass I could see our men crowding into other shore boats and pushing off in great haste. There was much struggling, and I saw occasional puffs of smoke, which, I knew, could not proceed from our fellows, all of whom were, of course, unarmed. Being closely followed by boats full of Frenchmen, our men made for the *Surprise*, which lay closer in than the rest of the squadron. By this time the pursuers were using firearms freely, and we realised that the business was a very serious one. We were therefore ordered to man and arm boats and to cover the retreat. Our fellows pulled like demons, and, with oars and boat-hooks, fairly sunk one craft which came too close. Those of us who remained on board were all on the bridge or in the top; but just as we were wondering whether we should not have to open fire with our machine guns, we were disappointed by the Commander-in-Chief semaphoring from the flagship that, bearing in mind the evident gravity of the situation, nothing must be done that might complicate matters. This order did not, however, prevent our captain from directing the magazines to be opened, and all preparations

to be made that could be made without too pronouncedly attracting the attention of the French. Meanwhile our boats had gained the *Surprise*, and the men were scrambling on board as fast as they could. A regular swarm of French boats of all kinds was crowding round the ship, and the people in them were screaming and gesticulating as if they were madmen. The Commander-in-Chief went in his steam launch to the *Surprise*. Through our glasses we watched his crew shoving the French boats aside, and I doubt whether the shore people would have made room for the launch to get alongside the dispatch vessel if a French officer had not opportunely arrived on the spot in a torpedo boat from up the harbour. When he appeared the French retired to a respectful distance, but continued vociferating so loudly that we could quite plainly hear them. The French officer followed our Admiral on board the *Surprise*, and there had an interview with him. Not long afterwards they were joined by a stout gold-laced, red-sashed dignitary from the shore; and the two Frenchmen between them made out, or tried to make out, that our blue-jackets had begun the row, had deliberately murdered some men in the wine-shop, and, in fine, that they only were to blame. Our Admiral, of course, promised to institute the fullest inquiry; but the French officers took a high-handed attitude from the first. They demanded that all our men who had been ashore should be surrendered. Compliance with this was out of the question. They then said that they had telegraphed to Paris for instructions. Before the Commander-in-

F. J. Mortimer
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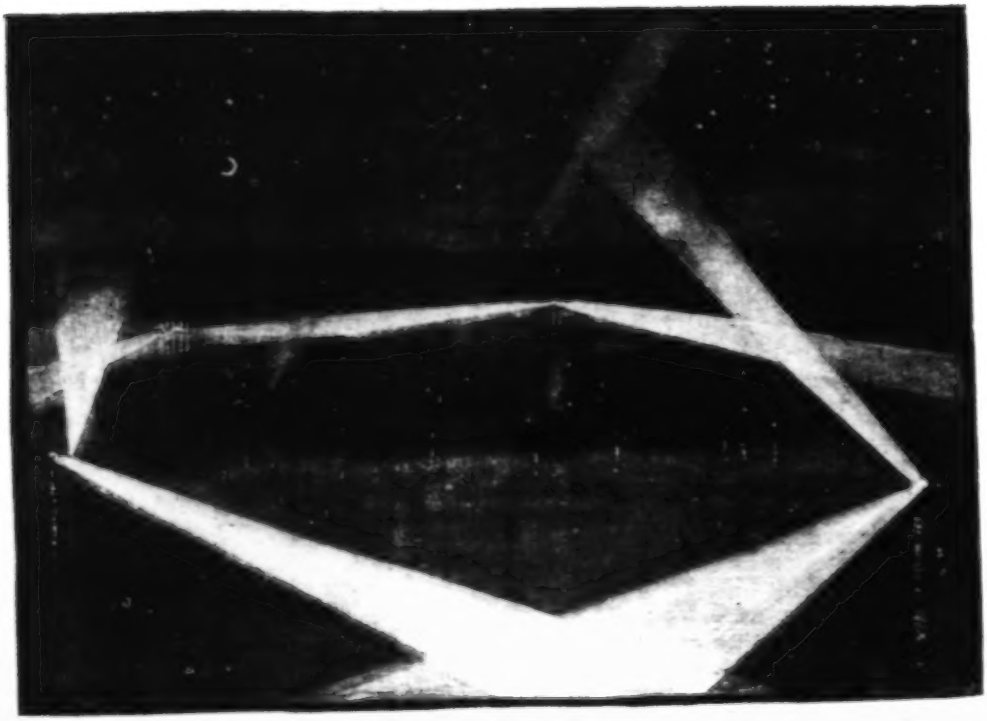


"CERTAIN CRAFT WERE ORDERED TO USE THEIR SEARCH-LIGHTS IN COMBINATION."

Chief got back to the flagship, we saw that most of the French ships in harbour were getting up steam.

"At a quarter to six all our captains were ordered on board the Admiral. When our captain returned, he looked very serious, and sent first for the commander, and then for the Fleet Engineer and all the lieutenants, most of whom remained with him in his cabin for three quarters of an hour. The French Admiral had promised to dine in the evening on board our flagship, but he sent a somewhat awkward excuse. If I may judge from what I saw in the wardroom in the *Benbow*, where I was a guest, the business spoilt the dinners of every one in both Fleets, for all our people had no end of work to do. We made as many preparations for action as we could without actually going to quarters: we got up steam for full speed; we kept unusually strict watch, and allowed no boats to approach us: and most of us unshipped all the pictures and breakables that we had in our cabins.

"At seven, the *Surprise*, by order, shifted her berth, and took up a fresh position outside our lines—we were anchored in two columns. The *Scout* and *Polyphemus*, under easy steam, went round the Fleet and swept their search-lights shoreward continually. To guard against sudden attack by torpedo boats, certain craft were ordered to use their search-lights in combination in such a manner as to form a complete path of brightness round the Fleet. The effect was very striking, but it was also very puzzling, for the illumination not only intensified the surrounding darkness, but also rendered it extremely

difficult for us to again 'pick up' any craft—and there were several about—after it had once crossed the protected zone; and when half-an-hour's experience had thoroughly demonstrated this, the experiment was ordered to be discontinued. The eyes of many of us had not, however, recovered from the dazzling results of the trial when, some hours later, we needed our best night sight; and I doubt whether we should not have been wiser had we relied solely throughout upon such natural light as was vouchsafed to us. At a quarter to nine a French steam launch went on board the Commander-in-Chief, and half-an-hour later we all knew what it had come out for. It brought a formal demand for the surrender by nine o'clock this morning of every officer and man who had been ashore during the day, and an imperious order that in the meantime no British vessel was to leave the roadstead.

"As soon as the French launch had shoved off again, the Commander-in-Chief signalled the Fleet to weigh. Almost at the same moment the *Scout* reported that a number of French ships were coming out. They soon began to play their search-lights freely on us, but we went on weighing as before, until one of their flagships, a great ironclad as big as the *Trafalgar*, but much higher out of the water, was abreast of the *Victoria*. It seems that the Frenchman hailed the Commander-in-Chief, and with great politeness demanded whether he intended to go to sea. Our lights showed us that all the French ships were cleared for action, and were full of men. I suppose that our Admiral said 'Yes,' and we half expected from

"A NUMBER OF FRENCH SHIPS WERE COMING OUT."

the threatening attitude of the enemy that fire would be opened at once. But the French Fleet passed on, and went quietly out in single line ahead, the battleships being between us and their own light craft, which, naturally, kept off, and seemed to be in no regular formation. They were all a mass of lights, and we could plainly see the officers in full dress standing on the bridges and poops, and saluting us as they passed, some of them at a distance of less than a couple of cables from us. As far as I could count, there were sixteen battleships, eight or nine cruisers, and over a dozen torpedo boats.[1] When they had got well outside of us, they suddenly extinguished all their lights, as if by preconcerted agreement, and ten minutes later another launch from the shore went on board the Commander-in-Chief. One of our lieutenants was in the flagship at the time for orders, and he told us on his return that the French had sent to say that any further attempt on our part to get away that night would, without hesitation, be prevented by force. Of course we were at once sent to quarters—we had really been at them all the evening, in the *Benbow*, at least. It was realised that, right or wrong, it was impossible, in the circumstances, to obey the dictation of any foreigner. At ten minutes past ten we got under way, and formed in two columns of divisions line ahead, the *Victoria*, *Camperdown*, *Edinburgh*, *Collingwood*, *Sanspareil*, and *Inflexible* constituting the starboard division in the order

[1] For the exact composition of the French Fleet, *vide* the statement at the end of this chapter.

named, and the *Trafalgar*, *Nile*, *Benbow*, *Colossus*, and *Dreadnought* the port. The *Polyphemus* was a mile and a half ahead, the *Undaunted* an equal distance on the starboard bow, the *Australia* an equal distance on the port bow, the *Scout* on the starboard and the *Fearless* on the port quarter, and the *Surprise* a mile and a half astern. A rendezvous, which, for obvious reasons, I suppress, was given us, and the course, so soon as we had made an offing, was south-west. Although a guest on board, I, of course, volunteered to be of what use I could.

"It was an intensely dark night, and there was a nasty sea from the south-east, but very little wind; half a gale, which had been blowing during the afternoon, having dropped at sundown.

"It is not my business—and, indeed, I am still far too fagged and knocked up—to tell you much about our individual feelings and actions. I believe that we were all determined to do our duty, and I venture to think that, in what followed, most of us did it, although, for once, the luck was against us. You at home must remember, ere you judge us, that we were outnumbered, that several of our heaviest guns were very defective even before the action began, that the speeds of our ships were very unequal, and that, upon the whole, the French vessels were better protected at the waterline than ours. I am bound to mention these facts in justice to the hundreds of brave fellows who are gone. It was not their fault that guns broke down, or that the Fleets were un-

"SUDDENLY A SHIP NEAR THE CENTRE OF THE FRENCH LINE BEGAN TO USE HER SEARCH-LIGHTS."

equally matched. With anything like equal forces, the results of this, the bloodiest naval fight that the world has yet seen, would, I am confident, have been different. Surely the blame lies, not with those who had to use the weapons, but rather with those who forged them too weak and too few for the work required of them.

"For three hours we steamed at about ten knots, the slowness of the older turret ships preventing our easily doing much more, save under great pressure. We saw nothing of the French, and, as we showed no lights, we had much difficulty in keeping station.

"At half-past one this morning, the *Polyphemus* flashed a signal to the effect that she had sighted the French Fleet about two miles ahead of her, apparently lying to. We therefore altered course six points to the eastward, so as to head south-south-east, and, if possible, avoid the enemy; but I suspect the French must have seen the flashes by which the order was signalled, for half-an-hour later, the *Scout* reported them a mile on her starboard quarter, steaming fast, and apparently coming up with us. We then put on full steam to the utmost capacity of our slowest ships, and again altered course two points to the eastward, so as to bring our heads due south-east; but the Fleet, as a whole, could not, it was soon found, do more than 10½ knots against the sea which was running, the *Inflexible* doing barely that, and lagging behind in the most dangerous way. The Frenchmen, therefore, steadily drew up with us, having altered course soon after we

did, and being able to steam fully 11½ knots, and perhaps more.

"It must have been inexpressibly galling to our gallant Commander-in-Chief thus to be obliged to show his heels even to an enemy of obviously superior force. But it is clear that he could not have remained at Toulon, where he could have accomplished nothing against the forts and batteries; and would, moreover, have been exposed to destruction from mines, submarine boats, and torpedoes worked from the shore, besides having to reckon with the French Fleet. It is clear, too, I think, that in the circumstances it was his duty, if possible, to avoid action; though on this point, there will probably be great differences of opinion. When once the French were outside of him, he had to think of Malta and Gibraltar, his immediate bases. I must, however, leave these questions for others to discuss.

"At this time I was sent for by the captain, who was on the bridge intently watching the *Nile*, whose huge hull ploughed through the water two cables ahead of us, leaving in her wake a broad strip of foam on the broken waves. The *Benbow's* bows plunged ever and anon into the seas, which dashed aft against the barbette, well-nigh hid the muzzle of the great gun as they burst, and deluged us with spray. We must have had hundreds of tons of water at a time upon the forecastle, but the ship rising, shook them off with scarcely an effort, and then plunged again, as the rolling seas lifted her by the stern.

"We had no torpedo boats with us, and, had we had any, they would have been only so many encumbrances in such a sea as was running. Even our biggest boats—the 135 ft. ones—do not steam well in circumstances like those which environed us early this morning; and, unfortunately, we had nothing between them and the regular torpedo cruisers, *Scout* and *Fearless*, vessels of 1580 tons displacement. Very useful indeed to the Commander-in-Chief would have been a few fast gun-vessels of the *Grasshopper* or *Sharpshooter* class, not so big as to be easily visible, yet big enough to stand the knocking about and still preserve a decent speed of 15 or 16 knots. Alas! we had nothing of the kind, the *Landrail* and *Sandfly* being detached. The French, on the other hand, were well provided in this respect. They had with them several large torpedo boats, or *avisos-torpilleurs*, of the *Bombe* class, which served them in particularly good stead as scouts, and which, being craft of over 300 tons displacement, could breast the sea. With these, as we speedily found, they were able to creep up and observe us, without being sighted until they were close upon us. We, therefore, had an uneasy feeling that we were all the time being watched by spies which remained almost invisible.

"Finding, at last, that it was hopeless to think of getting rid of the foe by out-steaming him, the Admiral—the French being now reported broad-on the *Inflexible's* starboard quarter, at a distance of between two and three miles—decided to attack. He, therefore, in accordance with a previously con-

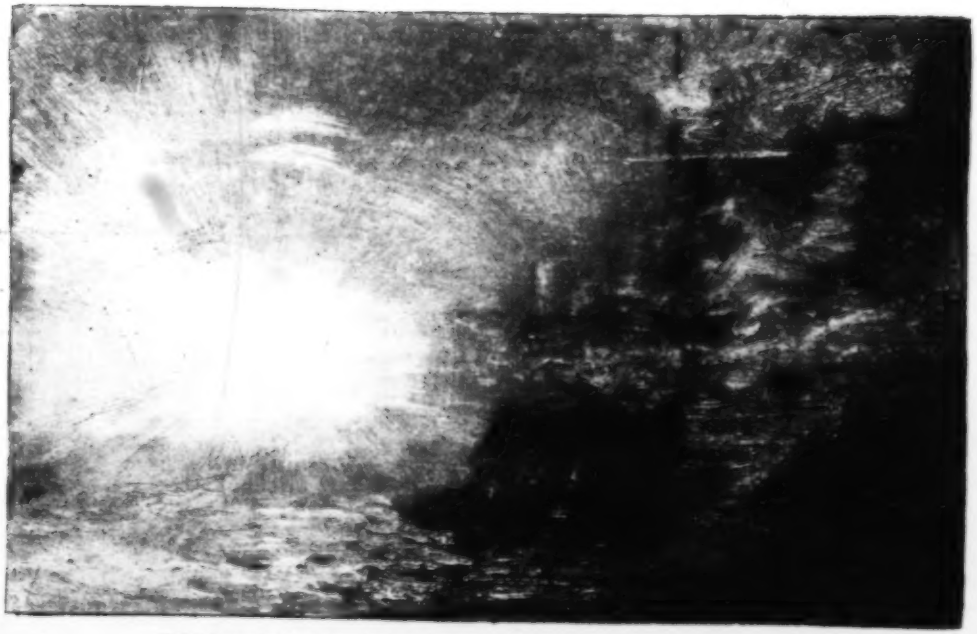
certed arrangement, led his division ahead of the other one, so placing himself in the van of a long single column disposed in line ahead; and having completed this change of formation, ordered the battleships to alter course in succession ten points to starboard, and the cruisers to obey previous instructions, which seem to have run to the effect that they were to be as useful as possible, and to be ready to tow the ironclads, but not to needlessly imperil themselves.

"It looked at first as if we were going to engage the enemy in the old-fashioned manner, for the French were steaming in a direction nearly at right angles with our line, and in single column; but they very speedily altered formation, so as to bring themselves into a line abreast in groups of three. In this formation the two fleets neared one another, the *Trafalgar* leading, the *Nile* coming next, and after us in succession coming the *Benbow*, *Colossus*, *Dreadnought*, *Victoria*, *Agamemnon*, *Edinburgh*, *Collingwood*, *Sanspareil*, and *Inflexible*.

"It was about half-past two o'clock. Suddenly a ship near the centre of the French line began to use her search-lights on us, and fired a blank charge. Immediately all the other vessels did the same, and we soon followed suit, not, however, firing. Both sides seemed to feel that to engage in darkness would be doubly dangerous; but, in truth, the electric lights served only to render the situation more puzzling. The effect of the light when it shines into the eyes of the spectator is confusing in the extreme. It is absolutely impossible to decide, or even to guess, how far off the projector, whence the

beam comes, is; and when the glare permits of surrounding objects being seen at all, it seems generally to show them distorted or misplaced. Moreover, in certain conditions of atmosphere, dependent, no doubt, upon the amount of moisture in the air, the beam, instead of being translucent, has the effect of a dazzling and semi-opaque white screen. Upon it, in these circumstances, shadows can even be cast, and phenomena resembling the mirage or the 'Brocken spectre' may be produced. I remember hearing Sir Nowell Salmon, years ago, tell how once in his steam launch he actually went in chase of one of these apparitions, and how he only discovered that he was pursuing his own shadow when he had occasion to shake his fist at the artificer in charge for not getting more speed out of the boat. I mention this solely because I am sure that more harm than good is, as a general rule, likely to be done during night actions by the use of the search-light.

A moment later the French opened a perfectly awful fire on us, apparently from every gun that would bear. It seemed as if the whole horizon had become a mass of ragged smoke and belching flame. Only a very few of our men happened to be on deck, but nearly all these were killed or wounded. The captain himself, who was still on the bridge, was wounded in the right leg, but he refused to go below. We got him into the conning tower, however, without further injury, and I remained at his side until the end, the enemy's fire continuing, without intermission, from the moment when it first began until the action was over.



"THE EFFECT OF THE LIGHT WHEN IT SHINES IN THE EYES OF THE SPECTATOR IS CONFUSING."

"IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO GUESS HOW FAR OFF THE PROJECTOR IS."

"The wind being so light as to scarcely stir the air, and that little coming now from the north-west, such smoke as did not hang rolled gently down the French line, and shrouded from us the greater part of it. Almost ahead of us was a group of ships, which I took to be the *Formidable*, *Hoche*, and *Marceau*. As the Admiral neared them he swerved to port and went straight for the *Formidable*, while we swerved to starboard and headed for what I believe was the *Marceau*. The *Nile* went for the remaining one. We thus put ourselves to windward of the flagship, and the smoke of her guns, as she opened fire, hid her from us. But I could see our immediate opponent quite plainly, a great towering single-funnelled three-masted ironclad, with a central battery, lofty sponsons, and a high forecastle. At less than a cable's distance we got one shell from our fore barbette gun fairly into her starboard bow, where it burst, wrecking all the fore part of her. At almost the same instant, however, something struck our conning tower and caused nearly everything in it to fly, so depriving us of our communication with the people at the guns, except by means of the voice tubes which still held, but which were, in the din, nearly useless. There were only the captain, the staff-commander, myself, and two signalmen in the confined little box, from which, of course, no one could be spared, and which, for the moment, was practically cut off from the rest of the ship. The 6-inch guns in our starboard battery fired once; but in vain did we shout down the voice tubes for them to continue, although we were now almost

"A TORPEDO HIT US ON THE PORT BOW."

brushing the paint off the Frenchman's side as she just managed to escape our ram, and although we might, had we given her a broadside from our guns well depressed, have blown her bottom out. In the meantime she was treating us terribly; and it was not until we had passed through the enemy and well beyond him that it was possible for us to send a man below to convey orders and to report upon what had happened.

"The news that came up soon afterwards was even worse than I had feared to learn. The whole starboard side of the box battery was beaten in, two of the guns in it were dismounted, and every man in the battery had been killed or wounded. Part of the hydraulic loading apparatus of the gun in the fore barbette had broken down, and the gun was useless; the funnels were so knocked to pieces as to seriously reduce our steaming power, two 5½ inch projectiles had hit us and pierced us below the water-line, and two of our compartments were flooded. There were many other damages, the details of which were not reported, and there was no time, of course, for full inquiry.

"The captain, in spite of his injuries, was still able to retain command, and he had, after clearing the French line, brought the ship round sixteen points to port, in order to renew the action with the *Marceau;* or, in case we could not discover her, to engage some other ship. But scarcely had we turned ere we were attacked by two of the *avisos-torpilleurs*, to which I have already alluded, as well as by several torpedo

boats of a smaller type. Ahead of us the battle was raging, and the night was lurid with flash and explosion; but abreast and astern of us all was darkness, and out of this darkness our little foes dashed upon us suddenly from all directions. At the first onset, as I have explained, our men had been driven from the quick-firing and machine guns on the upper deck by the enemy's terrible fire. Many of these guns had been dismounted or injured, and the torpedo boats came on while those guns which had escaped were being again manned. For a few seconds, in consequence, we had nothing with which to meet the attack, and, in the meantime, the enemy was blazing away at us from his 3-pounders and machine guns. We tried to use our search-lights once more, but we could not get them to work, probably because the cables had been destroyed. We did, however, succeed in opening fire to a limited extent before the enemy got very close, and, I believe, we sunk one of the small boats. But, although the men behaved splendidly, and worked at the guns with admirable steadiness, the game was up. A torpedo hit us on the port bow, just under the forward sponson; and, in an instant, or, rather, as soon as we realised what had happened, we knew that the dear old *Benbow* was done for. The shock was tremendous, and threw us all down, for the ship's bows rose violently into the air, and trembled as if they had been wrenched and twisted by some angry giant. But, bruised and bloody as we were, we were soon up again. The entrance to the conning tower was half blocked with the *débris* of boats and booms, yet the captain,

in spite of his wound, managed to struggle out on deck, and I followed. Several boats were by this time almost alongside, and, as we appeared, a French lieutenant in one of them cooly removed his hat, and made a motion as if to ask whether we surrendered. The captain fired his revolver at the gallant fellow, and, even as he did so, fell back, shot through the chest by a bullet from a machine gun. 'Don't haul it down while we float,' he cried, as he lay writhing in his last brief agony: 'remember what they will say at home.'

"We did not haul it down. We drove the boats off, and gave them a weak cheer as they went, but the ship was by that time settling rapidly down by the head, with a frightful heel to port. The boats were ordered to be got out. They were, however, all knocked to pieces. We did our best also to steam back into the still battling fleets, feeling that no fate could be much worse than the one which immediately threatened us; but the water had got into the stokeholes, owing, I suspect, to some of the bulkheads having given way under the pressure, and we could not move. Just when everything seemed most hopeless, I saw what looked like a small cruiser rapidly making for us, with all her lights showing. But she came too late for most of us. While she was still a full mile away the *Benbow's* stern rose high out of the water, so high as to send everything and everybody on deck adrift, and then, with a great gurgle, the ship dived down bows first.

"I have no further recollection that helps me to explain how, when the day was beginning to dawn, I found myself

"BY THE ENEMY'S TERRIBLE FIRE."

clinging to a splintered grating, alone upon the sea. I was dizzy and chill, and sore from head to foot, and I was almost naked, but I clung on mechanically. Indeed, my arms were so stiff that it seemed that I could scarcely have unclasped them, even if I had wished to do so. As the sun rose I caught sight of a vessel under steam, less than half a mile from me; and, although I was able to make no effort to attract attention, I was, in another quarter of an hour, so fortunate as to be picked up by a boat which was sent for me by the commander of the *Agostino Barberigo*, and to be taken on board by the kindly Italians. They tell me that at first I could give no account of myself, and that I could neither speak nor stand, but they treated me so well that by midday I recovered.

"My first question was, naturally, about the Fleet. Terrible, even beyond my apprehension, is the fragmentary story which my rescuers told me. The *Agostino Barberigo* had been almost within gunshot during the action, which had lasted for less than an hour. After the battle, her commander had hailed the French ironclad *Amiral Baudin*, and had learned that, of our ten battleships, five—namely, the *Benbow*, *Camperdown*, *Edinburgh*, *Inflexible*, and *Collingwood*—had been either sunk or compelled to strike, and that of the remainder, two at least, although they had temporarily got away, were entirely disabled. One of these was understood to be the *Victoria*, in which, quite early in the engagement, there had, apparently, been some serious accident. The fate of the *Polyphemus* was unknown, but she had rammed or torpedoed and sunk the

Trident. The *Australia* had got away, but the *Undaunted*, towards the end of the action, had made a gallant endeavour to ram the *Vauban*, and, although she had considerably damaged her, had been sunk, firing as she went down. The *Surprise* had got away, but was on fire when last seen. The *Fearless*, after colliding with one of our own vessels and having her bows stove in, had been taken. The *Scout* had rammed and sunk the cruiser *Sfax*, but had herself gone down, though I am glad to be able to add that most of her officers and crew are safe on board the cruiser *Cécille*. Finally, in addition to the *Trident* and *Sfax*, the French are said to have lost the *Vautour* cruiser and the *Kabyle—torpilleur de haute mer*—as well as two small torpedo boats.

"But the victory, which is an undoubted one, lies with them. Our Mediterranean Fleet, as such, exists no longer. Half of it has been destroyed or taken; the other half is disabled, and, in all probability, scattered. Never before, in all her history, has England experienced so complete a disaster upon the sea, and it can be but slight satisfaction to us to know that to purchase this grand success our enemies have spent an old second-class ironclad, a large but not very new cruiser, and three or four small craft, even when we know also that many of their other vessels must be severely damaged.

"When I was picked up I was nearly ten miles from the scene of the action; and, so far as I know, I am the only one of my ship's company that has escaped, though one cannot

but trust that others were picked up by the cruiser which was approaching us when we went down. The *Agostino Barberigo* had, however, on board about thirty bluejackets and a wounded sub-lieutenant, whom she saved when the *Camperdown* sank; and it is certain that in the French Fleet, the greater part of which put back to Toulon, there are many other survivors.

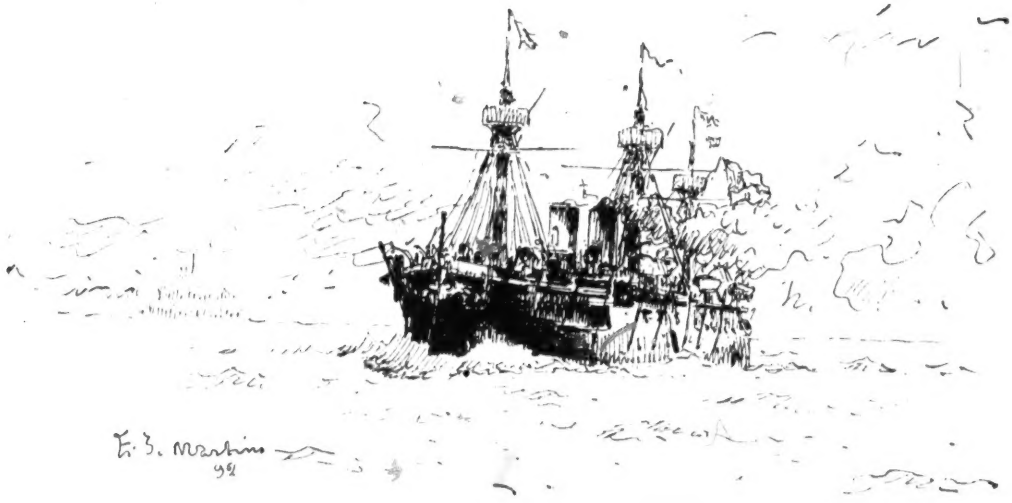
"I can add no more. As a British officer who, as a volunteer, has tried to do his duty, I cannot, nevertheless, avoid expressing the opinion that if we had had a proper Mediterranean Fleet—one equal or superior to that of the French, this grievous disaster would not have occurred. We allowed ourselves to be lulled to sleep by the peaceful aspect of affairs here; and the unforeseen storm has found us unprepared to cope with it. Such Fleet as we had was weak, not only numerically, but also in armour and armament: for enormous guns and partial belts have proved a failure. We have been pinning our faith too much to these partial water-line belts, and to guns of monstrous proportions. The only one of the *Sanspareil's* big guns that was fired broke down; the other could not, for some reasons which I have not been able to discover, be fired at all. And I am informed, by a seaman who belongs to the *Victoria*, but who had been lent as a signalman to the *Camperdown*, that the accident already alluded to as having occurred in the *Victoria* was, in fact, the bursting of a 110-ton gun in her turret. If I can, ere I start for home, learn any further details of our unexampled

misfortune, I will lose no time in telegraphing them. I am aware that this account leaves much to be desired. The awful circumstances in which it is written must be my excuse. The fact that I have, in a short hour, lost, as I cannot but believe, most of my shipmates and dearest friends, gives me personally such poignant pain that I can barely concentrate my thoughts; but even more am I overwhelmed by the consciousness of the irreparable loss in officers and material that has fallen upon the country. Would that half the gallant fellows who perished to-day were still at the call of England; for sorely will she need them."

Thus the bolt fell from a clear sky, and, within a few hours, the two most powerful naval nations of the world found themselves engaged in deadly struggle.

Elsewhere in its issue of that Black Wednesday, the *Times* gave particulars (see Table, p. 64), derived from other sources, of the victorious French Fleet. It also mentioned, in a leading article, that the telegraphic dispatch above quoted had been sent to it by Lieutenant Thomas Bowling, R.N., an officer on half-pay, who had been present as a guest in the ill-fated *Benbow*. And in its later editions it contained a great deal of bad news from a spot far less distant than the Mediterranean. This news will be found in the next chapter.

"REMEMBER WHAT THEY WILL SAY AT HOME."



"THE 'ALEXANDRA' HAS ALSO ARRIVED."

TABLE.

French Fleet Engaged in the Action of April 27th-28th.

	Tons.	H.P.	Guns.	Men
Battleship—				
Amiral Baudin	11,380	8,320	15	500
Courbet	9,652	8,112	14	670
Dévastation	9,639	8,154	14	685
Formidable	11,441	9,700	15	500
Hoche	10,650	11,300	20	660
Marceau	10,581	12,000	21	660
Amiral Duperré	10,487	8,120	19	664
Caïman	7,200	6,000	6	332
Friedland	8,824	4,428	16	676
Indomptable	7,168	6,605	6	332
Richelieu	8,767	4,240	19	720
Trident	8,456	5,083	16	730
Colbert	8,457	4,652	16	706
Terrible	7,713	6,230	6	332
Redoubtable	8,857	6,071	14	700
Vauban	6,150	4,561	11	440
Bayard	5,986	4,538	12	450
Cruiser—				
Cosmao	1,877	6,000	4	150
Tronde	1,877	6,000	4	150
Lalande	1,877	6,000	4	150
Sfax	4,502	6,522	16	473
Jean Bart	4,122	8,000	10	360
Cécille	5,766	9,600	16	486
Faucon	1,240	3,233	3	134
Vautour	1,280	3,391	5	134
Condor	1,240	3,582	5	134
Wattignies	1,310	4,000	5	140
Torpedo gun-vessels—				
Dragonne	395	2,000	Q.F.	63
Dague	395	2,000	,,	63
Leger	450	2,200	,,	63
Bombe	395	2,000	,,	63
Levrier	450	2,200	,,	63

And the first-class torpedo boats *Ayela*, *Audacieux*, *Ouragan*, *Téméraire*, *Kabyle*, *Orage*, *Aventurier*, and *Eclair*.

CHAPTER III.

SOME STAGGERING BLOWS.

N the first edition, already extensively quoted from, of its issue of Wednesday, April 29th, the *Times* contained the following telegram from its Portsmouth correspondent:—

"PORTSMOUTH, Tuesday, 9.30 p.m.—H.M.S. *Invincible*, guardship at Southampton, arrived here early this afternoon, and is now at Spithead, where H.M.S. *Hero*, *Minotaur*, *Hercules*, *Glatton*, *Galatea*, *Latona*, *Iris*, *Bellona*, *Seagull*, and *Rattlesnake*, all vessels belonging to the A Division of the Fleet Reserve of this port, are also at anchor. The ten ships last named represent the only Portsmouth vessels that are immediately available, and several of them are not really quite fit for sea. Moreover, they are all, at present, short-handed. It may be recollected that some time ago, when the five cruisers and two gunvessels of the Australian Squadron were commissioned, the rule restricting service on the Australian station to men of five years' standing and upwards was suspended in order to provide crews for them, and that, in addition, many men were taken out of the harbour ships. From the depletion which

was thus caused, the Royal Dockyards and the various Naval Barracks have never completely recovered; and in consequence there has to-day been the greatest difficulty in finding for the mobilised vessels even sufficient crews to take them to Spithead. Other ships could be sent thither, if only men were forthcoming. The ten warships that have been commissioned here would, to man them properly, need 2800 officers and men. Barely 1200 were available, and, although a few men of the Royal Naval Reserve have offered themselves, and have been gladly accepted, I doubt whether the total number of people now on board the ships in question exceeds 1500 all told. All kinds of civilians are volunteering, but none of them are accepted pending the receipt of instructions from the Admiralty. The ships are in the meantime busily engaged in getting in their powder and shell, and work is, while I write, being energetically carried on by the aid of the electric light. All the seaward forts are manned, and many of the buoys and beacons have been to-day removed, nor were the usual lights exhibited this evening; but unfortunately the conflict between the naval and the military authorities continues, and it is but too evident that the rapid perfecting of our defensive preparations is being dangerously delayed by the fact that the local command is divided. I learn, as I close this dispatch, that the *Alexandra*, flagship of the Reserve Squadron, from Portland has also arrived and has anchored at Spithead. The *Hotspur* from Harwich, the *Audacious* from Hull, the *Shannon* from Bantry, and the *Neptune* from Holyhead, are expected in the

course of to-morrow, and the *Iron Duke* from Queensferry, the *Superb* from Greenock, and the *Belleisle* from Kingstown on Thursday."

The same issue also contained the appended brief reports from Plymouth and the Medway :—

"PLYMOUTH, Tuesday, 11 a.m.—The *Conqueror, Achilles, Gorgon, Hecate, Prince Albert, Forth, Inconstant, Thames, Spanker,* and *Sharpshooter* have to-day gone out of harbour, and are now anchored with the *Black Prince* within the breakwater. They are the only vessels at this port that are in anything like a state of immediate readiness for sea, yet they are only half manned, and there is no probability, so far as can at present be seen, of providing proper complements for more than half of them."

"SHEERNESS, Tuesday, 11 p.m.—The following vessels of the Medway Fleet Reserve, A Division, are now here—*viz., Empress of India, Northampton, Cyclops, Hydra, Narcissus, Arethusa, Mersey, Medea, Medusa, Barracouta, Grasshopper, Salamander, Skipjack,* and *Sheldrake.* Though all of them have been officially reported as ready for sea, several—notably some of the cruisers and gun-vessels—are suffering from various temporary defects, and not one is, or at present can be properly manned, as neither lieutenants nor men are available in sufficient numbers. The *Empress* is reported to have developed defects in her big guns, and is therefore partially useless. The *Blenheim* is not completed, but she may be got ready in ten days."

It was further announced that the Channel Fleet, consisting of the battleships *Royal Sovereign*, *Anson*, *Howe*, and *Rodney*, the belted cruisers *Aurora* and *Immortalité*, and the small craft *Curlew* and *Speedwell*, was at Vigo, and had been ordered home by telegraph, *viâ* the Falmouth-Vigo cable. It might be expected at Spithead on Saturday morning. Most of the above-quoted news was of an unsatisfactory nature; for though the mention of so many ships as being more or less ready for sea inspired a certain vague confidence in the mind of the average layman as he sat at his breakfast table, the admission that, owing to lack of men, half of them were really useless, was one the significance of which could not but strike even him who had only the most casual knowledge of naval affairs. To the expert the reports were still more painful, for every expert knew well enough that ships like the *Minotaur*, *Shannon*, *Achilles*, *Prince Albert*, and others were, manned or unmanned, of little value save on paper. Naturally, therefore, the early morning news, and particularly the terrible intelligence of the catastrophe off Toulon, aroused immense excitement and universal uneasiness. But excitement does not at once betray itself. Men must first meet and talk, and hear one another's views and apprehensions concerning what has happened and what is to come. And ere they had time to meet and talk on that awful Wednesday, more alarming news than had yet reached them arrived, and drove them from a state of repressed excitement into a condition of panic.

The French had struck boldly, promptly, and effectively at Toulon, but, alas! not only there. Before ten o'clock a second edition of each of the morning papers announced the occurrence of a fresh and more humiliating catastrophe than that which had befallen us in the Mediterranean. The *Standard's* account is here given :—

"PORTSMOUTH, Wednesday, 6.45 a.m.—While lamenting the magnitude of the misfortune that has just overtaken a great part of the Fleet assembled here, and the dreadful fate that has overwhelmed I am afraid to say how many hundreds of Her Majesty's officers and men, it is impossible to avoid admiring the energy and dash of an enemy who, almost as soon as war is declared, succeeds in planting a deadly blow at our very vitals. What has happened is shocking in the extreme; but it is also marvellous. With a suddenness that seems almost inexplicable, the squadron at Spithead has been practically destroyed. Late last night it seemed ready to go anywhere and do anything; this morning the little that exists of it is a shattered remnant, barely able to keep itself afloat, and utterly useless for any of the purposes of the immediate future.

"I had, as you are aware, obtained authority from the Admiralty to proceed to sea as a passenger on board H.M.S. *Alexandra* during the Channel cruise, which it was yesterday announced the Reserve Squadron would undertake as soon as it could be assembled at Spithead. The only ships of the squadron to arrive yesterday were the *Invincible* from South-

"THE CHANNEL FLEET HAS BEEN ORDERED HOME.

F. E. Mathews
92.

"SHIPS WERE TAKING IN POWDER AND SHELL."

ampton and the *Alexandra* from Portland. The latter did not take up her anchorage until between nine and ten o'clock at night; but as she had been previously sighted and signalled, I—with some difficulty—engaged a shore boat and was at Spithead, ready to board her when she appeared. The ships already there were anchored in two lines, which stretched from the south-west, nearly abreast of No Man's Land and the Horse Sand to the north-west, abreast of Gilkicker Point and Ryde. The heavier part of the Fleet formed the line which lay nearest to the Isle of Wight, and, beginning from the south-east, consisted of the *Hercules*, *Minotaur*, *Alexandra*, *Hero*, *Invincible*, and *Glatton*. The cruiser squadron formed the line which lay nearest to the harbour, and, beginning from the south-east, consisted of the *Rattlesnake*, *Bellona*, *Iris*, *Galatea*, *Latona*, and *Seagull*. There were thus six vessels in each line, the *Rattlesnake* being abreast of the *Hercules*, the *Bellona* of the *Minotaur*, and so on; and there was a distance of two cables between the ships of each line, and of four cables between the lines.

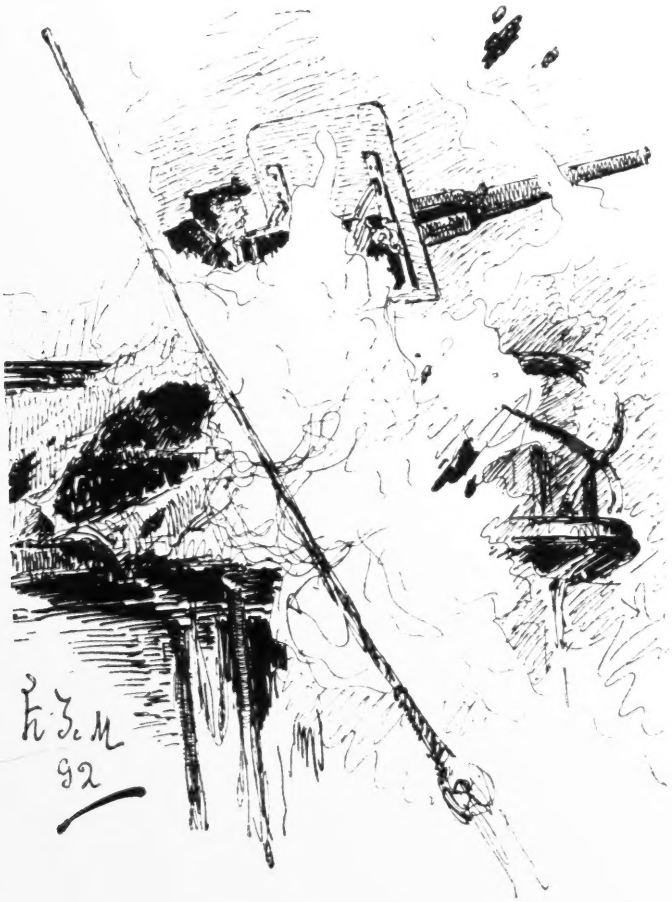
"Most of the ships, when I reached Spithead, were taking in powder and shell, and were doing so by the light of their search-lights, from the hoys and barges which lay alongside. Some ships, also, were completing with coal. All, moreover, were taking in sea stores and supplies of every kind, the result being that night seemed to be turned into day, and that Spithead was crowded with boats and launches. I boarded the *Alexandra* as soon as she had taken up her berth between

the *Minotaur* and the *Hero*; but, though it was getting late, there was, of course, no thought of turning in. Indeed, even if there had been no work on hand, and if Spithead had been as quiet as it commonly is at ten o'clock, there was so much anxiety in every ship concerning the news from the Mediterranean, and such continuous expectation that weighty intelligence of some sort would presently be brought off by one of the numerous craft from the shore, that no one cared to go to sleep lest perchance he might not hear the first word of definite intelligence. The few officers who had leisure to sit in the ward-room and smoking-room could talk of nothing but the war and the ships up the Straits. Those who had to be on deck thought, if they did not talk, on the same subjects. The Vice-Admiral and captain had gone ashore to see the Commander-in-Chief; the ship was in charge of the commander; and I had nothing better to do than to take stock of the scene around me.

"Alongside the *Hero* a hoy was hoisting out powder cases and boxes of ammunition, which were stacked around the turret on her low deck forward, and thence gradually removed to the magazines below. The *Minotaur* was filling up with coal, and had a barge on each side of her. The *Iris*, abreast of us, was, like the *Hero*, taking in her powder, and also a number of huge electro-contact mines—great red-painted iron cases, which must have weighed nearly a ton a-piece. We at first did nothing, but soon a coal barge came alongside, and we began not only to fill up our bunkers, but also to pile coal

on our decks, for the order had gone forth that every ship was to be coaled to her utmost capacity. Usually when a ship is coaling her ports are closed, and pains are taken to exclude as much as possible the all-pervading dust; but we and the other ships were coaling cleared for action, and with half the guns loaded and run out. No vessel had her torpedo nets completely down, as all had craft alongside; but all had a certain number of boats out, and the whole anchorage between the Nab on the east and Hurst Castle on the west was supposed to be patrolled by these and by torpedo boats. A large amount of material in the shape of spars and buoys had been towed out of harbour during the day, with a view to constructing substantial defence booms, within which ships might lie in safety; but the work of construction had not been begun, and most of the material was anchored on No Man's Land, where it was to remain for the night. No one, I think I may safely say, thought that there was the slightest probability of our being attacked. At midnight, however, with a view to making all sure, a couple of first-class torpedo boats were sent out by each entrance, and the four were ordered to scout between Christchurch and Selsea Bill, and at the back of the Isle of Wight.

"Portsmouth, as the crow flies, is only about seventy knots —nautical miles—from Cherbourg. A vessel steaming, therefore, at a speed of fifteen knots, should do the distance easily in five hours. Our enemy must have come from Cherbourg. He can scarcely, indeed, in the circumstances, have come from



"EVERY VESSEL OPENED IN THE DIRECTION OF THE FOE."

anywhere else; and he probably left Cherbourg at about nine o'clock, for he came upon us soon after two this morning. The sea was smooth, the night was dark and chilly, and our vitality was at its lowest, as most men's vitality is in the small hours, when suddenly, apparently not more than two or three miles from us, we heard the boom of a gun. In an instant all were on deck. Some declared that the sound had come from the east; others swore that they had seen the flash light up the sky over Egypt Point to the westward. The commander at once ordered away all the craft from alongside, and directed that the nets were to be fully rigged out; but, as everyone knows, lighters and barges cannot be got rid of in an instant, and long before the order could have been obeyed, we and our consorts were in the midst of one of the bloodiest struggles of which history gives any record.

"Within a minute of the time when we heard the first report we heard others, and saw over Bembridge Point the bouquet of a rocket which, we knew, had been fired by one of our boats as a signal that the enemy was approaching in force. I am not exaggerating, and I in no way do injustice to our officers and men, when I say that a scene of the direst confusion followed. The captain of the *Hercules* was the senior officer present. He signalled by means of flash lights from his mast-head, 'Cruisers will slip their cables and proceed with dispatch to sea in search of the enemy, those lying to eastward of the *Galatea* going out by the eastward, and those lying to westward of the *Iris* going out by the west-

ward entrance. Rendezvous, Spithead, 8 a.m. Battleships will prepare to slip cables and follow—' But the signal was never completed. The shore boats and lighters were still pushing off; our officers were still shouting at them from the bridge and gangways for their delay, and the poor bum-boat women were shrieking, partly from fear and partly because they and their goods had been separated, when another rocket and yet another went up from a point well on our side of the Nab, and, under the glare of their explosions, we saw, not a mile and a half from us, three or four low-lying black hulls, which we knew could only be those of the torpedo cruisers of the enemy. In an instant, and forgetful of our torpedo boats, which must have sent up the warning rockets, and which must, therefore, have been not far out of the line of fire, every vessel that could bring a gun of any kind to bear, opened in the direction of the foe. The roar was infernal, and, for a brief period, the dense smoke hid everything from us; but such slight air as there was gently carried the smoke to the westward, and soon we could see the enemy again. He was apparently none the worse for his reception, and was now much nearer to us. Fire was re-opened, and maintained with fury. The *Alexandra* was incommoded somewhat by the ships to windward of her, and fired only occasionally; but the *Hercules*, *Minotaur*, and *Rattlesnake* seemed to blaze away almost without intermission, and the volumes of smoke that came slowly to leeward showed how freely they were spending their powder. The

F. T. Merrill
'92

"A COUPLE OF FIRST CLASS TORPEDO BOATS WERE SENT OUT."

"THEY RENDERED ALL THE OTHER CRAFT OF THE ENEMY INVISIBLE."

enemy fired very little. We expected to hear him using his torpedoes. And use them he did, but not from the direction which we anticipated. That attack had lasted, I suppose, a quarter of an hour, and there had been little, if any, cessation of the firing from our side, when, to our consternation, a second attack quickly developed itself from the westward. It is quite clear to me now that the eastward attack by three or four torpedo cruisers—probably vessels of the *Condor* and *Bombe* types—was merely a feint intended to amuse us while the real attack from the westward was being made. The Needles, or westward passage to Spithead, is not a particularly easy one in any circumstances, and is commanded not only by numerous batteries, but also by the Brennan torpedo station at Fort Cliff End; but our enemies chose to take the risk of coming to grief in their attempt to find their way in by that passage, and it must be sadly admitted that the results have more than justified their temerity.

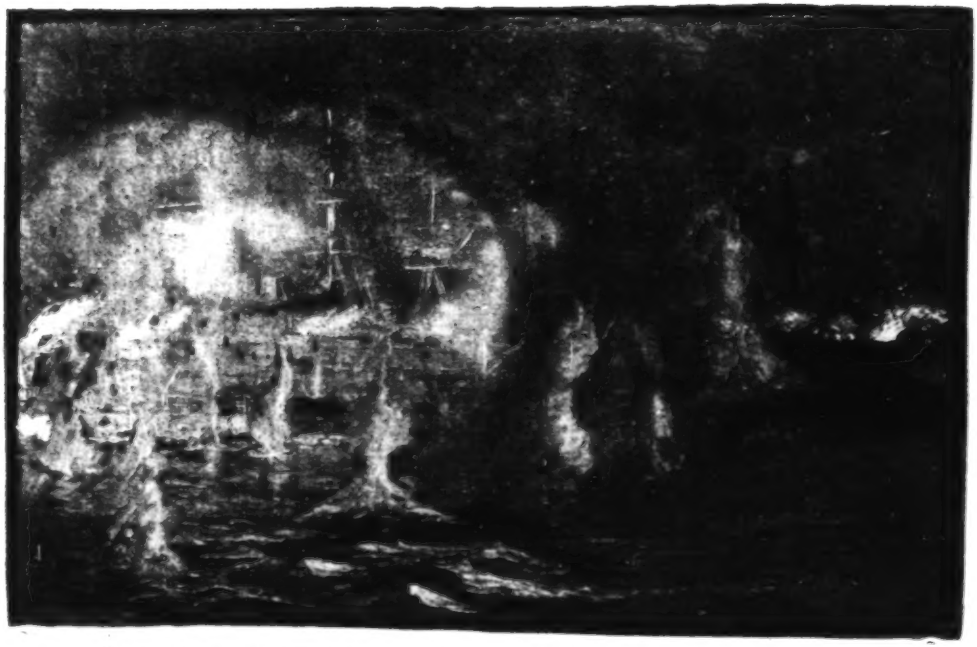
"The real attack was delivered by torpedo boats only, some being of the '*haute mer*' type, and others of the ordinary first-class. The larger vessels seem to have acted as 'division boats,' and there appear to have been four divisions engaged, each division on this occasion consisting of one *torpilleur de haute mer* and three torpedo boats, making sixteen craft all told. I do not pretend to be certain either as to the exact numbers or as to the exact constitution of the force; but those who had the best opportunities of knowing, place both as I have given them. The flotilla must have evaded our scouts,

possibly by first making the land near Christchurch and then by keeping close under it; for it was not seen until, almost like a flash, it steamed in close order past Fort Cliff End. Both Fort Cliff End and Hurst Castle were using their search-lights, and it was owing to this fact that the enemy was discovered. But the forts were unprepared for instant action, and ere fire of any kind could be opened, the boats were somewhere abreast of the Bramble, and within ten or twelve minutes' steam of their quarry. Even when the forts did open they did no harm, for the smoke of the action which was raging at the other end of the anchorage was drifting between them and the enemy. Besides, when the search-lights from the forts, or later, from the ships, fell upon any particular craft, they rendered all the other craft of the enemy completely invisible; and the operators, speedily becoming conscious of this fact, and being anxious to show up as many of the enemy as possible, shifted their projectors so rapidly as to confuse the eyes of the men at the guns. The truth seems to be that the most effective shelter under which a torpedo boat can approach to do damage is the shelter afforded by a search-light played upon some other vessel by the intended victim. Moreover, very few guns could be brought to bear, the chief works being so constructed as to be almost powerless for action on the Solent side, and being mainly designed to impede the foe as he comes in from the west-south-west, not to destroy him after he has got in. Thus the French steamed up without let or hindrance to within quite a short distance of the *Glatton* and

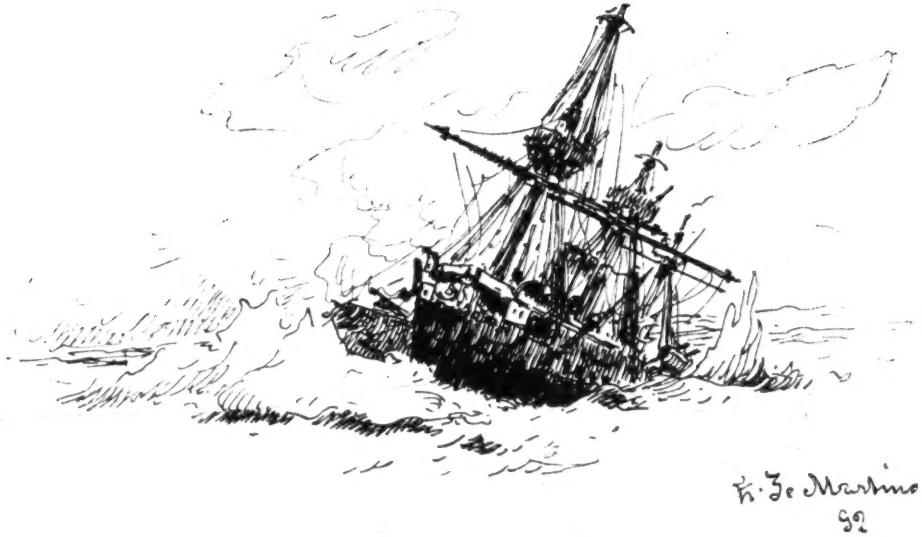
Seagull, which formed, as I have already said, the north-eastern extremities of our two lines. These ships, or their picket boats, sighted the flotilla when it cannot have been anything like a mile from them. At the first shot from the Fleet, or perhaps before it, the divisions must have separated in order to act in accordance with orders previously given to them. Two divisions, now formed in a single column of line ahead, came up at full speed between our lines. The other two divisions, disposed respectively on the port and starboard quarters of the central divisions, came up also in columns of line ahead, one on each side of the still anchored Fleet. The central divisions came on therefore at a distance of about two cables from the ships on either beam of them. The other divisions kept about as far outside the lines, and the speed I imagine was fully eighteen knots. As the boats executed that terrible rush through us, they were saluted with a perfect hurricane of projectiles; but they did not, so far as I know, fire a gun in reply, and I fear that a good many of our own shot intended for the central divisions must have done more harm to friend than to foe. It was fearful work: the very silence of the grey boats made the now brilliantly illuminated though smoke-dimmed scene the more impressive. One could not help admiring so splendid an exhibition of pluck, even though one was fully conscious of the magnitude and imminence of one's own peril. But there was little time for thought. Our lines were less than a mile in length. Travelling at eighteen knots a boat covers a mile in about three

minutes, and in five or six minutes at the outside the dismal tragedy had begun and ended. The French launched their torpedoes with wonderful precision, the central divisions discharging both right and left, and the outside divisions, which approached a few seconds later, apparently endeavouring to rectify any mistakes or omissions which their comrades of the centre had been guilty of. Too well, alas! did they do the business. It is as yet too early to send you details, save of what happened to the vessels immediately within my own sphere of vision; but there is no hope, that, by waiting, I can obtain any less disheartening general results than those which I can already give you. The *Hero*, *Invincible*, *Iris*, *Galatea*, and *Bellona* have been sunk or have been obliged to run ashore to avoid sinking; the *Minotaur* has been blown up, the explosion of a torpedo having, it is believed, fired some of the explosive stores which she had just taken on board; the *Alexandra* has a great hole in her port quarter and a compartment full of water; and the *Glatton* has a hole in her bows. Only the *Hercules*, *Latona*, *Seagull*, and *Rattlesnake* have escaped uninjured. A torpedo, barely submerged, seems to have actually exploded in contact with the *Hercules*, but that ship's stout construction and armoured belt saved her from anything worse than a very severe shaking. Several lighters and small craft were also sunk; and the loss of life, in one way and another, is, I fear, frightful. It is doubtful whether more than fifty of the *Minotaur's* people survive. The blowing up of the vessel was so violent that we, who were

anchored immediately astern of her, felt as if we were jerked out of the water, and a moment later our decks were covered with and even set on fire by her burning fragments. May I never live to have another so awful experience. Limbs, ragged pieces of charred flesh, scraps of clothing, as well as wreckage, fell on board of us; and the shock of the explosion smashed everything in the *Alexandra* that had not already been shattered by the bursting of a French torpedo under her own port quarter. The *Iris* was struck just before we were, and, being in a sinking condition, was run on to the Sturbridge Sand, where she lies with her bows in two and a half fathoms. The *Bellona* is on the Harrow Bank, immediately under Fort Monckton. The *Galatea* and *Hero* lie sunk at their anchorages; and I am sorry to have to say that, in the struggle, a quantity of ammunition on the *Hero's* deck blew up, killing and injuring a number of people. The *Invincible* sank while endeavouring to run on to the outer Spit. The heaviest losses were suffered by the *Minotaur*, *Hero*, and *Galatea*. The other ships have lost very few men killed, but have had a good many wounded; and in all the vessels which were torpedoed there were numerous sufferers from the poisonous and suffocating effects of the explosive gases and from shock. The *Alexandra's* loss is ten killed, and sixty-four wounded or otherwise injured. The torpedo which struck her threw down everyone on board, and raised a column of water of such volume that when part of it fell on deck, it washed men into the scuppers just as if it had been a heavy sea.



"IT WAS FEARFUL WORK; THE VERY SILENCE OF THE GREY BOATS MADE THE SCENE THE MORE IMPRESSIVE."



"THE BLOWING UP OF THE 'MINOTAUR.'"

"The enemy also have suffered, but very slightly in comparison with us. Two *torpilleurs de haute mer* and four torpedo boats are said to have been sunk or blown up, and of those which got away several are known to have been badly damaged. Whether our fire did any harm worth mentioning to the small cruisers which began the affair is more than we can tell. We cannot, however, claim to have done much more than destroy six little craft, and to have worked other harm which, altogether, may represent a quarter of a million. The French have done us damage to the extent of at least two and a quarter millions in money alone. They may have lost a hundred in killed and wounded; we, at the lowest computation, have lost nearly a thousand. The blow, therefore, is one the seriousness of which it would be folly to shut one's eye to. It is, as far as the Portsmouth squadron is concerned, a thoroughly crippling one.

"That the French attack was both well designed and well carried out it is impossible to deny. It came swiftly after the declaration of war; it was so arranged as to give the attacking torpedo boats the full advantage not only of the feint from the eastward, but also of such wind as was moving; and it was designed in such a way as to place the torpedo boats, after they had done their work, in a position whence, in case of necessity, they could be rescued by their friends the cruisers. In fact it cannot be doubted that, after their wild rush through our lines, some of the boats must have been very glad to run at once under the protection of their larger consorts; for

several of them were certainly badly mauled. Of our own four boats which went out at midnight to scout we have as yet heard nothing; but there is every reason to fear, at least with regard to those which were on the eastern side of the Isle of Wight, that they have been destroyed or captured. The *Rattlesnake* slipped her cable and followed the retreating enemy for some miles, but was recalled by the Vice-Admiral, who was returning from the shore when the alarm was first given, and whose steam launch narrowly escaped being run down by the port line of French torpedo boats as the vessels turned at the head of our port line in order to rejoin their friends. The Spithead forts, I should add, did not fire during the engagement. It is rumoured that they had not been supplied with ammunition. The Commander-in-Chief has just left harbour in his yacht, the *Fire Queen*, to inspect the ships which are damaged or aground, and to settle what is to be done. In the meantime the town is in a panic, other attacks being feared. The blowing up of the *Minotaur* broke nearly every pane of glass in Southsea, and created such alarm that several aged people are reported to have died from fright."

The second edition of each of the morning papers contained a dispatch to the above effect. The bad news, owing to the lateness of its arrival, was printed without comment; but immediate comment was unnecessary—the intelligence spoke for itself. We had been suddenly deprived of the services of five ironclads and three cruisers; which, added to the tale of vessels that had been lost or taken off Toulon, made a total of ten

ironclads and five cruisers accounted for by the enemy within forty-eight hours of the commencement of hostilities.

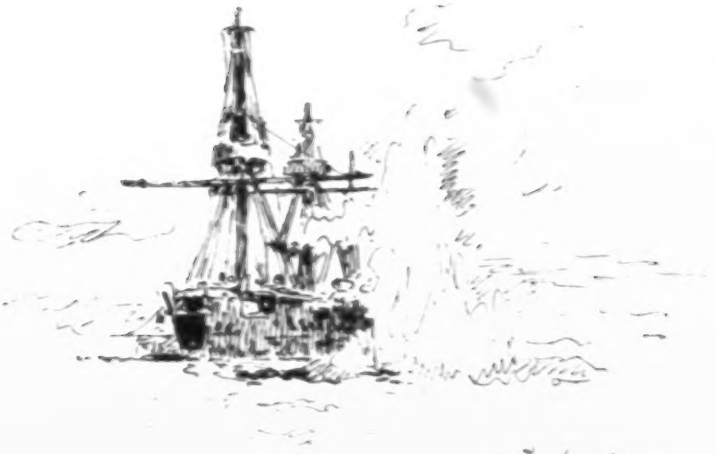
The panic that ensued has had no parallel in the history of the country. The violation of our coasts, and indeed of our chief naval port, was an exploit which the majority of Englishmen had for generations deemed beyond the power of any foreigner or combination of foreigners: and the shock of knowing that it not only could be, but had been effected, threw nearly all men off their balance. The less-educated classes entirely lost their heads, and, at hastily summoned meetings in Trafalgar Square and elsewhere, wildly denounced not only those who were, but also those who were not, responsible for the disaster. It was, perhaps, difficult to apportion the responsibility among those who might be fairly blamed—among, for example, the members of the Government, the Lords of the Admiralty, and the chiefs of certain departments—but it was ridiculous to blame, as many mob orators did, the admirals and captains who had been concerned. Steadier brains realised this, and their views were substantially represented on this occasion by the *St. James's Gazette*, which in the course of its reflections that afternoon, said:—

"Let us be under no delusion as to the real causes of our misfortunes. These may be easily catalogued. For years we have had naval manœuvres every summer; and all of these have been full of valuable lessons, to the majority of which we have, nevertheless, kept our eyes shut. For years we have had a large number of ships on the list of the Royal Navy;

"MAY I NEVER LIVE TO HAVE ANOTHER SO AWFUL EXPERIENCE.

but we have not taken the trouble to make certain that the greater part of these shall always be ready for immediate service. For years we have had a Naval Intelligence Department; but we have not made it large enough to be thoroughly efficient, and we have never raised it to the level which it ought to occupy as the supreme adviser of what should and what should not be done in naval affairs. For years we have known that the French Fleet at Toulon was being gradually increased, but we have never taken care that our Mediterranean Fleet should be in all respects superior to it. For years we have had it dinned into our ears that divided command at the naval ports—especially with regard to coast and harbour defences—is a source of danger, but we have not listened. For years we have been told that we were lamentably short of stokers, seamen-gunners, and, indeed, bluejackets of all sorts; but our efforts to increase their numbers have been spasmodic and half-hearted. For years we have been aware that excessively big guns were a broken reed on which to depend, but no action has been taken in consequence. We might extend the lamentable catalogue of our omissions and commissions, but it is useless and undignified to moan over the unalterable past. The future only is now our concern. Existing arrangements have convincingly demonstrated their feebleness and inadequacy. Some means must be provisionally adopted for properly managing the naval affairs of the Empire. It may be a bad thing to swap horses when one is crossing a stream; but if one's own horse be sinking, there is no better

course open. The Admiralty has collapsed; yet, although it is moribund, it still has the power to work harm. Let it, therefore, gracefully and promptly hand over its duties to stronger men. We do not blame their Lordships so much as we blame the system under which they have worked. But we have no time for making compliments or for considering excuses. Already we have been hardly hit. Another blow may paralyse us altogether. The safety of the country is the one thing to be thought of, and we trust that neither the Admiralty nor the public will think of anything else. To the one we recommend unselfishness and resignation to the needs of the moment; to the other, calmness, loyalty, and patriotic devotion. Ours is not an inheritance to vanish in a day, but neither is it a treasure to be trifled with."



"THE ATTACK ON THE 'HERCULES.'"

"A TORPEDO EXPLODED UNDER HER OWN PORT QUARTER."

CHAPTER IV.

A LETTER OF MARQUE.

IT has already been said that the account of the battle of Toulon had been sent to the *Times* by Lieutenant Thomas Bowling, R.N., a half-pay officer who had been a guest in the *Benbow*. In thus corresponding with a newspaper this officer had, of course, broken the regulations; and it must be admitted that the peculiar circumstances of the case did not tend to diminish his fault in the eyes of his superiors. All that he had to say should have been said to their Lordships, and not to the public; and when the natural excitement consequent upon participation in the stirring events concerning which he telegraphed had subsided, Mr. Bowling was as willing as anyone to admit this. Unfortunately, he had acted upon the impulse of the moment, and under the conviction that a whole country was waiting in awful suspense to hear what he happened to be able to relate; and this rashness cost him dearly. On Wednesday the moribund Admiralty summarily removed Mr. Bowling's name from the Navy List, and ordered that the delinquent should be

informed that his services were no longer required by Her Majesty.

The next step taken by their Lordships was more important, and possibly more necessary. They convened by telegraph a meeting of certain naval officers of high rank and great experience at the Admiralty. They also obtained the presence of the sorely-worried Prime Minister, and of several of his colleagues; and by three o'clock in the afternoon of Friday, the Admiralty, as such, had ceased to exist. Its place had been taken by, and its powers transferred to, a Supreme Board of War, and the nominations to the Board had all been duly confirmed by Her Majesty. This Board was constituted under the presidency of one of the Royal princes, a personage of great tact and experience in the conduct of affairs, and devoid, of course, of political bias; and it consisted of two branches, the Naval and the Military. Of the Military it is unnecessary here to say more than that it was not, as the Naval branch was, a new formation. The Naval branch was placed under the control of a Chief Director of Fleets; and for that high and responsible office Sir Humphrey Thornbeigh, an Admiral of the widest knowledge, remarkable decision of character, and unrivalled administrative ability, was chosen by acclamation. Immediately under him were the chiefs of the various departments—*viz.*, the Staff and Intelligence Department, the Construction Department, the Engineering Department, the Ordnance Department, the Victualling Department, the Hydrographic Department, the Stores Department, the

Sanitary Department, and the Secretarial Department. Many of the old permanent officials were retained, but many also were discharged; and for these, retired officers and a few civilians, who were chosen because they possessed special technical knowledge, were substituted. The chiefs of departments were, in all cases, officers of flag or post rank; several being men who, although they were on the retired list, were still full of work and energy; and, in spite of the fact that the new arrangements could obviously be not expected to work with perfect smoothness at first, the knowledge that such officers as Sir Humphrey Thornbeigh, Sir George Lyon, Sir William Howl, Sir Mewstone Hewart, and their like, had undertaken the management of affairs, exerted, from the very first, a salutary influence on the rather depressed spirits of the Royal Navy.

The Channel Fleet had sailed from Vigo before the advent of the new Board to office: but several fast cruisers were despatched to intercept it, and new orders were sent to the coastguard vessels and the various dockyards; with the result, that by Saturday, May 2nd, without the occurrence in the interim of any further mishap, the following ships, with steam up and everything ready for sea, were assembled within proper defences at Spithead. Battleships: *Hercules*, *Neptune*, *Audacious*, *Iron Duke*, *Hotspur*, *Belleisle*, *Royal Sovereign*, *Anson*, *Agamemnon*, *Howe*, *Rodney*, *Triumph*, *Superb*, *Conqueror*, *Achilles*, and *Black Prince*. At Plymouth were the coast defence ironclads

Hecate, *Hydra*, *Gorgon*, *Cyclops*, and *Prince Albert*, and the armoured cruisers *Northampton*, *Shannon*, *Aurora*, *Immortalité*, and *Narcissus*. And in the Channel were the lighter cruisers *Forth*, *Thames*, *Mersey*, *Indefatigable*, *Latona*, *Melampus*, *Inconstant*, *Intrepid*, *Naiad*, *Arethusa*, *Medea*, *Medusa*, *Barham*, *Bellona*, *Barossa*, *Seagull*, *Rattlesnake*, *Spanker*, *Sharpshooter*, *Barracouta*, *Grasshopper*, *Salamander*, *Skipjack*, *Curlew*, *Speedwell*, and *Sheldrake*. These ships were largely manned by Naval Reserve men, who had by this time become available in considerable numbers, and by members of the recently-disbanded Royal Naval Artillery Volunteers, a corps which at last began to be appreciated. The reinforced French Channel Fleet, consisting of the ironclads *Tonnerre*, *Requin*, *Victorieuse*, *Furieux*, *Suffren*, *Vengeur*, *Fulminant*, *La Galissonnière*, and *Tempête*, with the cruisers and gun-vessels *Surcouf*, *Aréthuse*, *Coëtlogon*, *Duguay-Trouin*, *Epervier*, *Lance*, and *Salve*, besides torpedo vessels, had gone out with the intention of meeting our Fleet on its way from Vigo, but had been evaded, and was still at sea. For the moment the country was almost reassured, although reports that were in themselves sufficiently bad reached England almost every hour, of merchant vessels captured or burnt, both in the Channel and in the Mediterranean as well as elsewhere.

In the meantime, Mr. Thomas Bowling, after having travelled with all haste by way of Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland, had reached England on Friday, May 1st, and had found, to his intense chagrin, that his occupation had

deserted him. An officer who loved his profession as he did could have received no heavier blow. No one doubted his bravery, his capacity, or his single-heartedness. He owed the loss of his commission to no fault that reflected on his honour, but solely to the very impulsiveness which, in other circumstances, might have shown him the way to professional distinction. His position was not enviable, so far as his professional prospects were concerned.

Thomas Bowling, or, as he was invariably called in the service, Tom Bowling, was a lieutenant of a little more than eight years' seniority, and had worn his extra half stripe for scarcely three months when all was taken from him. Rich and well connected, a favourite in society, and a man of great ability, he was, according to the opinion of nearly all his unprofessional friends, wasted in the service. They would have preferred to see him in Parliament, or in the army, or even living the life of an English country gentleman. But Tom Bowling did not adopt that view. He was not fond of unnecessary talk, therefore he had no Parliamentary aspirations. He did not think that the army opened a more suitable career than the Royal Navy to an Englishman. And as for country life, he liked it only as a temporary relaxation. It must be admitted that he was not particularly well fitted for military life as we know it in England. His small wiry figure would have looked wholly insignificant in the uniform of any regiment; and he had for what may be called the superior niceties of dress an unaffected contempt, which would scarcely

"THE 'BELLONA' ASHORE."

"WHOSE STEAM LAUNCH NARROWLY ESCAPED BEING RUN DOWN."

have harmonised with the pipe-clay conventionalities of the parade ground, or the fashions of a woman's boudoir. The sea was the only place where he felt completely at home. He could shoot or hunt on every day of a fortnight's leave, but at the end of that time he had always had enough of it, and invariably longed to be on board ship again. He was completely wrapt up in his profession; and although he had an income of nearly twenty thousand a year, he would, when he returned to England on the 1st of May, have gladly surrendered the whole of it rather than lose his commission.

He heard the news as soon as he arrived in town, and for a moment it overwhelmed him. But he was not a man to be for long cast down. He had been foolish, but he had done nothing to be ashamed of. His naval friends still had confidence in him: he was rich, young, and strong, and he had an equable buoyancy of spirits that no misfortune could permanently depress.

"They have kicked me out of the service," he said to an officer whom he met in that cheerless waiting-room in which the Admiralty has for generations permitted its professional visitors to cool their heels, "and I suppose that they are right. But if I live I am going to find my way in again, so I'm not going to sell my uniform yet, though I hope that when I put it on once more, I shall find another half stripe at least on it."

"I'm devilish sorry, Bowling," said his friend, "and I wish you all the luck in the world, but you'll find it an uphill

game, I'm afraid. After all, you know, they've let you down pretty easily. They might have court-martialled you."

"And shot me, perhaps," continued Bowling, laughing; "for Heaven only knows what they can do in war time. One of the things that I must certainly do is to take a course of Queen's Regulations before I get back into the service."

"And what else are you thinking of doing in the meantime?" asked his friend.

"Well, I've come here to take Uncle Humphrey's advice, if I can get it, and whether I can get it depends upon whether, in his new billet, he has leisure to see me. I was at sea with him years ago. You see, France has decided not to observe the stipulations of the Treaty of Paris, and both she and we are issuing letters of marque. My own idea is to get a ship and make a privateer of myself. Do you know of anyone who will stand in with me?"

The officer smiled. "I shouldn't mind something of the sort myself," he said, "but I'm going to commission the *Gossamer* to-morrow morning. I wish you were going with me, old chap; and I'll take you on board as a passenger if you like to come; but as for helping you in the privateer business, why, I haven't any money to put into it. I wish I had."

"I can get the money, I suppose," said Bowling, awkwardly. "The most serious difficulty is to get men. It is a pity that I can't serve under you as my skipper. That's what I should like."

"Thanks for the compliment," returned Lieutenant St. John warmly; "but I am booked. If you take my advice, you will command your own craft. You won't find a better qualified man. They are digging up all the retired commanders and lieutenants for the new men-of-war, the coast defence business, or the merchant cruisers. There is a terrible dearth of officers, as well as of seamen-gunners and stokers; and I really am almost astonished that they plucked up courage to get rid of you. You may take it as settled that you won't be able to get any retired naval officer, who is fit for duty, to join you."

"That's encouraging. Then I must get the best men I can. Do you know any yachtsmen who are worth their grub and who know something of navigation?"

"I know Day. He would, I am sure, go with you if I were to advise him to do so. I will give you a line to him. He is a barrister, who, instead of practising, likes to wander about the world in a twenty ton yawl, or to hunt for treasures on desert islands, or to do anything of that kind. You may trust him as a sailorman as you would trust yourself, and I happen to know that he is in town. I daresay, too, that he can introduce you to some more men of the same sort. How are you going to get a ship?"

"I haven't the ghost of an idea yet. I only got home this morning, and I haven't had time to look about."

"And what sort of a sum are you prepared to pay for her? Don't think me inquisitive. I may be able to help you."

"As much as I can raise," answered Bowling. "I'm ready to put all I am worth into the business, and I fancy that I know others who will take a share. Do you really know of a vessel?"

"Yes, I do, but the figure is high. Of course, since war broke out, no man-of-war that happened to be lying in the contractors' yards has been allowed to leave. Now, there's a very fine armoured cruiser in the Tyne. She has been built for one of the South American Governments, and she is practically ready for sea. Indeed she was to have been handed over yesterday. I happen to know that the builders are going to offer her to the Admiralty for £300,000. That's a big sum, but the craft is a very smart and likely one, and she can do her 17 knots without using forced draught. Why not try to get her? The Admiralty—I mean the Board of War—is scarcely likely to buy her; for we can hardly man the ships we have."

Bowling knitted his brows and gazed reflectively at the bare floor. "Humph!" he exclaimed after a pause, "it is a big sum; but I'll think about it. Who are the builders?"

"The Elswick Company; and the ship's name is the *Valdivia*."

"Then give me that line to your friend Day. I'm staying at the Grand Hotel."

St. John scribbled a hasty note and gave it to Bowling. "Good-bye," he said, "and good luck to you, and don't forget to drink the saucy *Gossamer's* health." And, having been at

"THE FLEET AT MUDROS."

length summoned to the presence of one of the chiefs, he hurried away upstairs.

Bowling himself saw Sir Humphrey Thornbeigh, or Uncle Humphrey as he was affectionately called in the service; but when, after giving him as many details as possible of the Toulon affair, he sounded him upon the subject of restoration to the Navy, the Admiral assumed a rather horny-eyed expression, and gave him no encouragement. "You have contravened the Queen's Regulations; you must take the consequences as they have been dealt to you by the late Board." That was Uncle Humphrey's verdict, and the brief interview was ended.

But Bowling, who knew the Admiral well, was not very astonished when, later in the day, a messenger brought him a note which ran: "My dear Bowling, make it convenient to take an unofficial breakfast with me to-morrow morning at the Admiralty at eight o'clock, and in the meantime believe me yours faithfully, Humphrey Thornbeigh."

It was barely noon when Bowling left the Admiralty—noon on Friday, the 1st of May. He walked thoughtfully to his hotel, sat for five minutes with a pipe between his lips in the smoking-room, and then rose suddenly, left a message as to where he might be found, and hurried across the road to Craig's Court. His solicitor had an office there. The solicitor was a little Jew, shrewd, but honest as the day.

"Look here, Lawson," Bowling began, as soon as he was in the presence of the lawyer. "I've not come to spin you a

yarn about the battle, and I don't want sympathy, and I don't want advice; I just want your help. Can you give me the rest of the day, luncheon time and all?"

"I suppose I can, if it is a matter of business," said Mr. Lawson.

"Very good. First of all, tell me how much money have you in the house? I want a deuce of a lot at once. In the meantime be good enough to send this note to Mr. Day, of Gray's Inn, and let the messenger ask Mr. Day, with my compliments, whether he can make it convenient to call and see me here as soon as possible."

The solicitor called a clerk, and despatched him with the note. "I could let you have a thousand in an hour, Mr. Bowling," he said.

"A thousand! Why, man, that's of no use to me. I want heaps more. What am I good for? How much can you raise on me? How much can you borrow on me?"

"What do you want?"

"I want three hundred thousand pounds by this time to-morrow."

Mr. Lawson fell back gasping. "Three hundred thousand pounds!" he ejaculated. "What?"

"Three hundred thousand pounds," repeated Bowling. "Can you raise it, or can you not?"

"I daresay I can raise it, if only I have time enough; but by this time to-morrow—"

"If you can't do it, or the greater part of it, someone else

must. But you can do it; you have interest with bankers and people of that sort. Now, be a good fellow and spare no pains and no expense; and, above all, waste no time over the business. Sell me up entirely if necessary, body and soul. Get rid of everything."

"But, Mr. Bowling," said the solicitor, who suspected his client of sudden madness, "in justice to yourself, let me know what you are going to do?"

"You know that they have deprived me of my commission?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm going to buy it back again. I'm going to endeavour to render them anxious to have my services once more. To be brief: I'm going to buy a ship and take out letters of marque, and get to sea as soon as I can manage it. Now you know all you want to know."

"But surely you are not going thus hastily to embark your whole fortune in such a precarious venture?"

"Well, don't let us argue: that is my intention. Now, will you take the needful steps at once? This office must be mine for the next day or two. You must give me a room in which I can see people, and a clerk to write letters, and a boy to run messages; and I must be able to carry on here, if necessary, night and day."

Lawson made no audible reply, but rang a bell, in answer to which a second gentleman of Hebrew physiognomy entered.

"Lazarus," said the solicitor, "Mr. Bowling wants to raise three hundred thousand pounds at once—mind you, at once. Please see what can be done, and don't lose a moment. You have the papers, and Mr. Bowling will be close at hand. I wish him to have a table here. Put another also for Mr. Brownlow, who is to hold himself at Mr. Bowling's entire disposal until further notice. I can undertake no further business to-day. If anyone calls, say that I am engaged."

Mr. Lazarus disappeared. "He'll do his best," said Lawson, "and I'll do mine."

Mr. Brownlow was a most capable clerk and shorthand writer, and he saved Bowling no end of trouble. He took down from Bowling's dictation a long telegram to Sir W. Armstrong, Mitchell & Co., asking that firm to send immediately to London an agent fully competent to negotiate for the disposal of the *Valdivia*. He also took down telegrams to several people who, Bowling imagined, might be willing to assist or join him. Finally, the clerk took down a telegram addressed to the proprietors of the *Times*. "In consequence of my dispatch to you from San Remo," it ran, "the Admiralty has removed my name from the Navy List. I intend to take out letters of marque, and I shall be glad to learn what assistance or co-operation you may be inclined to render me in fitting out a vessel. Time presses."

In the course of the afternoon Mr. Day called in reply to Bowling's note. He was a tall, untidy, slim, slightly bowed man, with black hair and moustache, spectacles, and a some-

what hesitating and nervous manner of speech. He looked very little like a barrister, and still less like a sailor; and at first, Bowling was very far from being favourably impressed. But it soon appeared from his conversation that Mr. Day knew a good deal about the sea, and, what was perhaps as important, he proved to be an intimate friend of the Duke of Norland, a nobleman who, besides being of immense wealth, possessed an adventurous spirit, and had much influence.

"It is very curious," said Day, after Bowling's plans had been partially explained to him, "that only last night, when I was dining with the Duke, he suggested that I should buy a steam yacht and fit her out as a privateer. He offered to supply some money—he didn't say how much—and I told him that I was quite ready to put down what I could afford, though that, I am sorry to say, is only a matter of a few hundreds. The worst of it is, however—and I told him so—that I know nothing about steamships. I'm quite willing to join you in any capacity; indeed I shall be only too pleased if I can be useful. I'll go and see the duke at once, and try whether I can't persuade him to take a hand in your venture. Of course, he won't go himself; but I don't doubt that he'll take a share, possibly a big one." And Mr. Day departed, promising to lose no time and to return later.

This was satisfactory, as far as it went. Not less so was the reply of the proprietors of the *Times*, who, in the course of the afternoon, sent a representative to Craig's Court. This gentleman, after thanking Bowling for his account of the

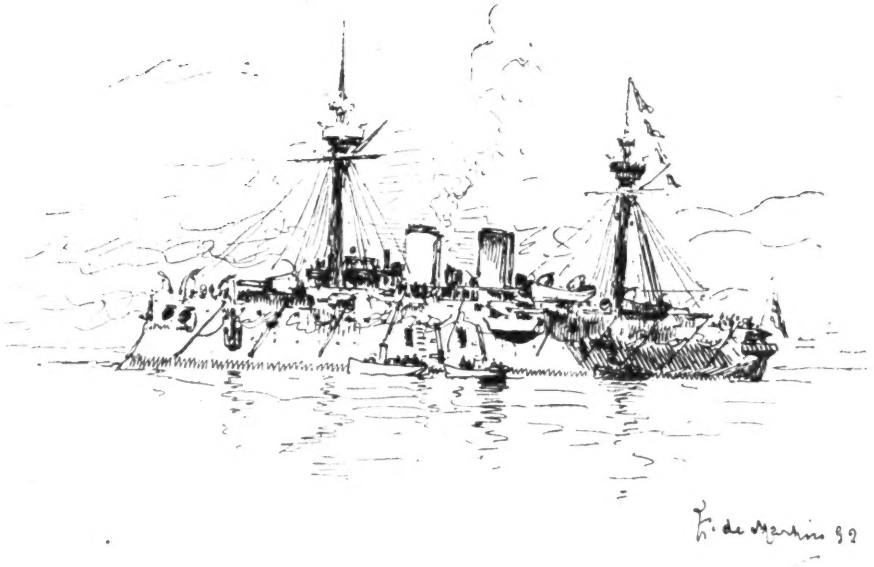
Toulon affair, listened to the outlines of the scheme, and then said he was empowered by his principals to take on their behalf a twentieth share in the first cost of the vessel, on condition that a twenty-fourth share in the net profits—if any—of the venture should be guaranteed to them, and that Bowling should contrive to act as their correspondent. Lawson at once drew up a form of agreement to this effect, and the representative of the *Times* took it away with him, he also promising to return later.

The next visitor of importance was an emissary from Elswick. He had, upon receipt of Bowling's telegram, been despatched by special train to town, and brought with him full particulars of the *Valdivia*. These were briefly as follows:—

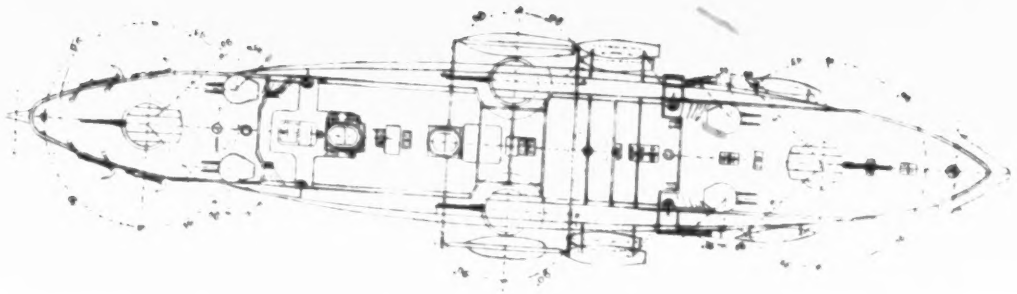
The *Valdivia* is a steel twin-screw armoured cruiser of 6900 tons displacement, with engines capable of developing 8000 indicated horse-power with natural draught, and of giving a speed of seventeen knots; and capable of developing 12,000 indicated horse-power with forced draught, and of giving a speed of nineteen knots. The vessel's dimensions are: length, 328 ft.; beam, 60 ft. 8 in.; depth to upper deck beams, 35 ft.; mean draught, 21 ft. 10 in. She has a complete water-line belt of compound armour, over 6 ft. 5 in. wide, with a maximum thickness of 11¾ in., a complete protective deck of 2-in. steel, and above the deck a light central redoubt 134 ft. 6 in. long, armoured with 4-in. steel. The armament consists of four 9·2-in. 23-ton breech-loaders thus disposed—*viz.*, one on the forecastle,

having an arc of training over 135 deg. on each bow; one on the poop, with a similar arc of training on each quarter; and one in a sponson on each broadside amidships, with an arc of training over 180 deg. on the beam. Each of these guns fires *en barbette* over an armoured breastwork, and is covered by a steel screen. The secondary armament consists of eight 4·7-in. quick-firing guns disposed in pairs in lightly armoured steel turrets, one on each bow somewhat abaft the barbette, and one on each quarter somewhat before the barbette. These guns all train over arcs of 135 deg. The twelve guns above named are on the upper deck, where also are mounted four 6-pounder quick-firing guns, and six 5-barrelled Nordenfelt machine-guns. In each of the two tops there is a Maxim gun of rifle calibre; and on the main deck there are ten 6-pounder quick-firing guns, three being on each broadside within the redoubt, two forward and two aft. There are six ejectors for Whitehead torpedoes, one in the bow and one in the stern being under water. There are also three powerful electric search-lights, a steam cutter, and steam pinnace, and the usual boats and fittings. The ship has two funnels, and has fore-and-aft sail on two light masts, each of which is provided with a military top. The coal capacity of the bunkers is 400 tons, an amount sufficient for 7000 knots, steaming at a speed of ten knots.

The Elswick agent laid before Bowling these, together with more detailed particulars, as well as plans, diagrams, and inventories; and Bowling very speedily decided that, if he could raise the necessary money, the vessel would exactly suit



THE LETTER OF MARQUE, "VALDIVIA" (AFTERWARDS "MARY ROSE").



DECK PLAN OF THE "VALDIVIA."

his views. She was of a type, fast and well armed and fairly well protected, especially at the water-line, that was absolutely unrepresented in the Royal Navy, although the Chilian ship *Arturo Prat* was on very similar lines. He felt that, while she promised to be an excellent cruiser, she was powerful enough to tackle, in case of need, any but the most formidable battleship. Having, therefore, engaged the agent to remain for twenty-four hours in London, and to keep open Messrs. Armstrong's offer for that length of time, Bowling set to work with renewed energy to solve the financial problem.

In this he was greatly assisted by the Duke of Norland, who in the course of the evening drove to Craig's Court with Day. The Duke was an eminently practical man. He was too old, he said, to go to sea in the *Valdivia*, and he could, he knew, be more useful on shore. What he would do was this. He would undertake, in conjunction with his friends, to form a syndicate which should take a half share in the cost and a two-fifths share in the proceeds of the venture, provided that Bowling and his friends would bear the remaining half of the cost and accept the remaining three-fifths of the proceeds. In the meantime, Bowling might draw on him personally to the amount of a hundred thousand pounds.

During the interview, in the course of which this unexpectedly satisfactory arrangement was arrived at, several of Bowling's friends, who had been summoned by telegraph, called; and as Day had mentioned the business to some of

his acquaintances who were yachting men, several of them also dropped in. Moreover, the representative of the *Times* returned; the Duke sent round to the clubs for certain of his friends, naval and otherwise, in whom he placed confidence; and the emissary from Elswick was summoned from his hotel. By midnight, therefore, a committee of ways and means, with full powers, was in session in the largest room of Mr. Lawson's office, and when it broke up at daylight, nearly everything was settled. The Duke drove home; Day and two of his friends departed to visit the various ports and to engage men; and Bowling, finding that it was nearly five o'clock, and remembering that he was due at Sir Humphrey Thornbeigh's breakfast table at the Admiralty at eight, relinquished every idea of turning in, and, instead, wrote some letters, had a cold tub in the kitchen by favour of Lawson's housekeeper, and then walked over to Whitehall.

Sir Humphrey was waiting for him. "Well, Bowling," he said, "yesterday you came to see the Admiral, who, I hope, made you feel that you had behaved most improperly. To-day you have come to breakfast with the old friend and shipmate, who is very sorry that you are out of the service, and who will do all that is in his power to help you. I don't mind saying that I look upon you as too good an officer to lie rusting on shore in such times as these. What are you going to do? Have you any plans?"

Bowling related not only what he proposed to do, but what he had already done; and Uncle Humphrey's grey eyes

sparkled. "You haven't let the grass grow under your feet," he said: "but you don't suppose that I'm going to let you take such a fine fighting craft as the *Valdivia* out of the country, and man her with a lot of 'long-shore ullage' that will render her anything but a credit to everyone concerned. Not I! yet since you have been so prompt, so energetic, and, I may add, so disinterested, I don't feel that I should be altogether consulting Her Majesty's interests by thwarting you. Perhaps, even, it is my duty to help you a bit. Oblige me by ringing the bell, Bowling."

A servant appeared, and Sir Humphrey ordered him to bring in certain volumes and lists which he mentioned. When they were before him, he said, "Now, Bowling, you know how hard pressed we are for men. I'm afraid we can't spare you much that is worth having. But here are the names of some retired officers, commissioned and otherwise, whom we intend to call out. Some have not been long out of employment, as you may see. If you like to choose half-a-dozen of them, and can let me know that they are willing to go with you, I'll undertake that the Royal Navy shall not want them just at present. Do you understand? I believe that they may be as useful with you as with us, for the *Valdivia* is a fine craft, and you ought to be able to make something of her. But, mind you, I reserve the right to take these officers when I want them, and I expect you to submit yourself in a general way to my orders. You know me well enough to understand exactly what I mean. You have your chance,

Bowling, and it seems to me a bright one. May God bless you."

Bowling was much moved by Sir Humphrey's kindness to and confidence in him. He selected two warrant officers and three lieutenants, substituting for his first choice one or two names which Sir Humphrey suggested as being more suitable. Then, with a feeling that some of his most formidable initial difficulties had been removed, he bade good-bye to his patron, walked to his hotel, packed up his gear, and, in pursuance of an understanding which had been come to at the meeting in Craig's Court, took the earliest possible train to Newcastle, where, alone, he could attend to the immediate fitting for sea of his first command. In the train he enjoyed the most refreshing sleep that had come to him since the catastrophe off Toulon, for new hopes and enthusiasms had taken the place of old anxieties and despondencies.

CHAPTER V.

THE ATTACK ON THE ROCK.

HE naval policy of France in almost all her wars with Great Britain has been to gain, if possible, some material advantage without deliberately risking a Fleet action. The naval policy of Great Britain has simply been to seek the enemy's Fleet and to endeavour to sink, burn, or take it. On numerous occasions France has missed the opportunity of gaining a great victory because she has preferred the prospect of securing ultimate advantages. On occasions still more numerous Great Britain has won a great victory because she has had no eye for anything more distant than the foe. The methods of action have been contrasted over and over again, and most ably by Captain A. T. Mahan, U.S.N., in his volume on "The Influence of Sea Power upon History." This valuable work appeared some time before the sudden outbreak of hostilities off Toulon; and so convincing is it, at least to the Anglo-Saxon mind, on the subject of the relative values of the traditional naval policies of the two Powers,

that it is difficult for an Englishman to believe that, after the publication of that book, France could ever again have been capable of playing her old part. But service traditions are not easily destroyed; and after having, in a moment of unreflecting rage, fallen upon the British in the Mediterranean and practically annihilated them there, France settled down into her usual modes of war. It is true that she reinforced her own *Division cuirassée du Nord*, and sent it, as has been shown, in search of the home-coming British Channel Squadron; but that was on the impulse of the first heat of hostilities. She soon dispatched word to it to proceed to Gibraltar, whither she also ordered a strong squadron from Toulon, leaving in that port only sufficient vessels to watch the very small and enfeebled British force which, after the Toulon disaster, had assembled at Malta. The captains of the partially disabled British ships would, no doubt, have all proceeded to Gibraltar after the battle, especially as Gibraltar had been named by the Commander-in-Chief as his rendezvous; but several of the vessels were so mauled and leaky that they needed immediate docking, and, as everyone knows, there is unfortunately no dock at Gibraltar, while at Malta there are good facilities for ships of all sizes. The consequence was that, after the Toulon affair, the *Colossus*, *Sanspareil*, *Victoria*, *Polyphemus*, and *Surprise* went to Malta, and only the *Trafalgar*, *Dreadnought*, and *Australia* to the Rock.

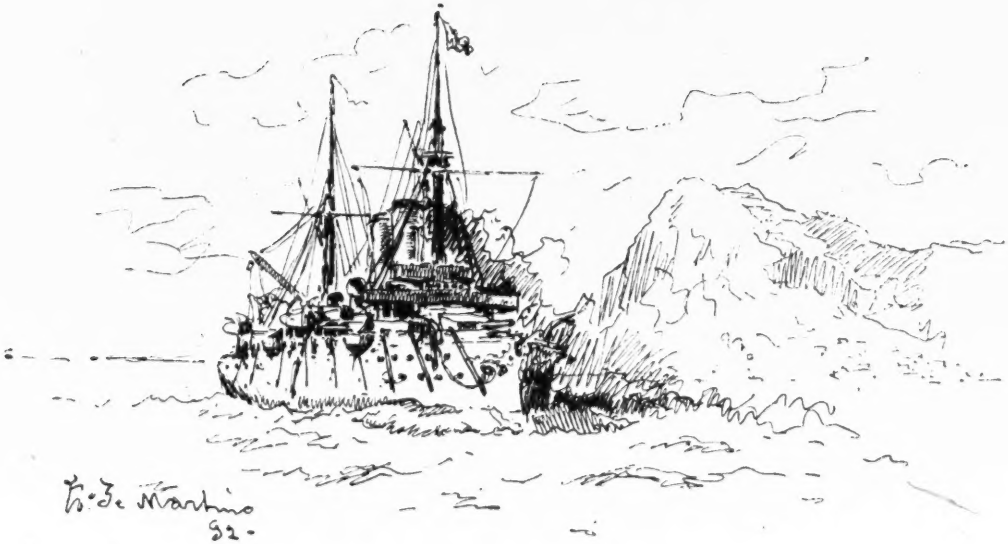
Thither also went the French *Division cuirassée du Nord*.

The *Australia*, which, having received but little damage in the action, was kept on scouting duty in the Strait, sighted it early on the morning of May 2nd, and at once steamed in to report. Of course, a British force of two battleships, a belted cruiser, and the three first-class torpedo boats, Nos. 7, 18, and 70, which, apart from stationary and harbour craft, constituted the entire floating strength at Gibraltar, could hope to do very little against a French Fleet of eight ironclads and six cruisers, besides torpedo boats. The Malta cable informed the Admiral that he must, for the present, harbour no hope of succour from the eastward. He depended, therefore, for help upon the Fleet which he knew was gathering at Spithead, and, in the meantime, he made up his mind to confine himself mainly to the defensive. But his prospects looked blacker than ever when, on Sunday, May 3rd, a second hostile Fleet coming from Toulon was sighted. This included the ironclads *Formidable*, *Dévastation*, *Hoche*, *Amiral Baudin*, *Terrible*, and *Indomptable*, which, with the *Victorieuse*, *Requin*, *Furieux*, *Suffren*, *Fulminant*, *Vengeur*, *Tempête*, and *Tonnerre*, made a fleet of fourteen ironclads, besides smaller vessels, designed for the attack on Gibraltar. The idea of the directing brains in Paris was, no doubt, that, if Gibraltar fell, Malta would fall too; and that, after the capture of these strongholds, the Mediterranean might be reduced to the condition of a French lake.

Gibraltar had been held, even by many French writers,

to be impregnable. A very great number of heavy ordnance, including two 100-ton, and a battery of 38-ton guns, of tolerably modern construction, had been mounted in it, and in the matter of water and of provisions it was better prepared against a siege than it had been at any previous period of its history. But it lacked armoured defences of the most recent kind, as, for example, Gruson cupolas; and it also lacked a proper supply of quick-firing and machine guns. Yet it was very strong. So, too, was the French Fleet.

The two French Fleets, having effected a junction, kept under easy steam off the Barbary coast between Ceuta and Tangier during the whole of Sunday, and never approached within about ten miles of the Rock; but after sunset, having crossed to the European side opposite Tarifa, they steamed eastward under cover of the land, and kept barely outside the limit of Spanish territorial waters. Thus they reached the mouth of Gibraltar Bay, where, formed into two divisions, they opened a furious fire, at a range of about 9,000 yards, on that face of the fortress which extends from Europa Point to the new Mole. Each division moved independently and slowly in a circle, and, the wind coming briskly from the north-west, the smoke was borne away in such a manner as to inconvenience neither side; but, as the night was dark, the practice was at first very indifferent. The garrison and the warships lying off the old Mole replied promptly and spiritedly, but used search-lights,



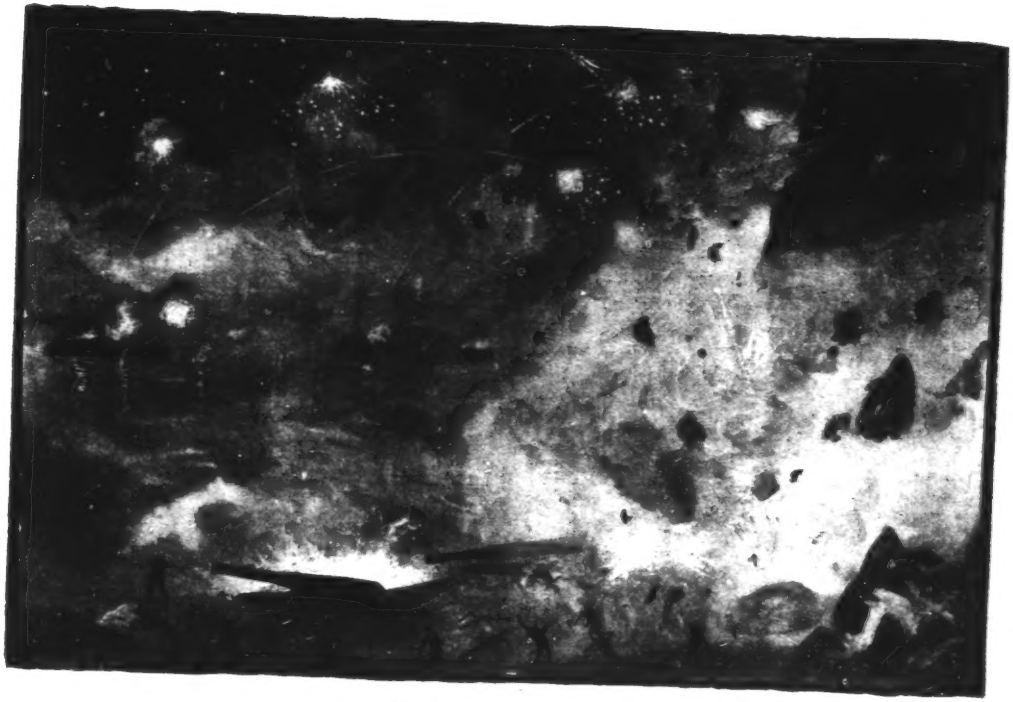
"OFF THE ROCK."

and so, after a time, assisted the aim of the enemy, who, throughout, showed no lights at all. Discovering their mistake, the defenders turned off their lights, and used instead rockets, which were fired well to seaward, and burst, if not over, at least in the direction of the foe, and, for brief intervals, showed them clearly under the bright blaze of the magnesium stars. But the range of the rockets was not sufficient to render their light thoroughly effective, and they seemed to help the attack fully as much as the defence. The French further improved their situation by occasionally throwing on to the Rock a species of carcase, which burnt very brilliantly, and could not be extinguished. Whenever one of them fell near a battery, the enemy seemed to find no difficulty in getting the range, and immediately poured in so hot a fire that for a time that particular position became almost untenable. Even the solid rock failed to resist the enormous force of the heavy mélinite shells which were hurled against it in bouquets, as light and opportunity served, and which, bursting, brought down hundreds of tons of *débris*, choking up the casemates, and sometimes burying guns and gunners in common ruin. These shells also, when they burst, as they once or twice did, in a gallery, or in any comparatively confined space, evolved such[1]

[1] Picric acid is supposed to form the main constituent of mélinite. "Picric acid is very deficient in oxygen, as its formula shows. The productions of its explosion will, therefore, largely consist of the actively poisonous carbonic oxide, and hence, as a blasting agent in mines, it

suffocating fumes that all near were obliged to crawl away, or to remain and be stifled. All night, from sunset to dawn, the bombardment continued without intermission, for not until daybreak was the Fleet out of sight behind Cabareta Point, and it continued its fire as long as it was within range. It withdrew apparently intact, and a few hours later it was seen cruising as before on the south side of the Strait, still fourteen ironclads strong. Some ships, no doubt, had suffered; but the Rock, it was tolerably clear, had suffered more. The loss of life, it is true, had been small in comparison with the huge number of projectiles that had been thrown into the place, but the damage to the material had been enormous; and both inhabitants and garrison looked forward with considerable uneasiness to the prospect of a long succession of nights similar to the sleepless night of the 3rd of May. The ships at anchor off the old Mole had not been struck, and they were therefore able, upon the withdrawal of the French, to proceed to the mouth of the Bay, so as to be ready, in case of need, to afford some protection to any British vessel that might seek shelter beneath the fortress; but they could attempt nothing more, and, indeed, the whole attitude of the defence, during the days of anxiety and nights of horror that followed, was,

would be objectionable. In digging out some shells which had been charged with some picric acid explosive and fired into earth, some French soldiers were poisoned by the noxious fumes some time after the shells had been fired and burst."—Major Cundill's "Dictionary of Explosives." 1889. Page 87.



"THEY OPENED A FURIOUS FIRE."

so far as the men-of-war were concerned, perforce a very passive one.

But there was an opportunity for the torpedo boats; and nobly did they avail themselves of it. The following account of the exploits of boat No. 70 on the second night of the attack is taken from the *Daily News*. No. 70, it should be explained, was a 125 ft. boat, 13 ft. broad, with a displacement of about 75 tons, engines of 670 indicated horse-power, and a smooth water speed of 19·5 knots. She was built at Poplar by Messrs. Yarrow & Co., in 1886, and carried, in addition to her torpedo armament, three machine guns, and a crew of sixteen officers and men. The *Daily News* correspondent, who was, by profession, a medical man, was permitted to accompany the boat as volunteer surgeon. There were thus seventeen all told on board the little craft when she went out on as perilous a mission as was ever undertaken.

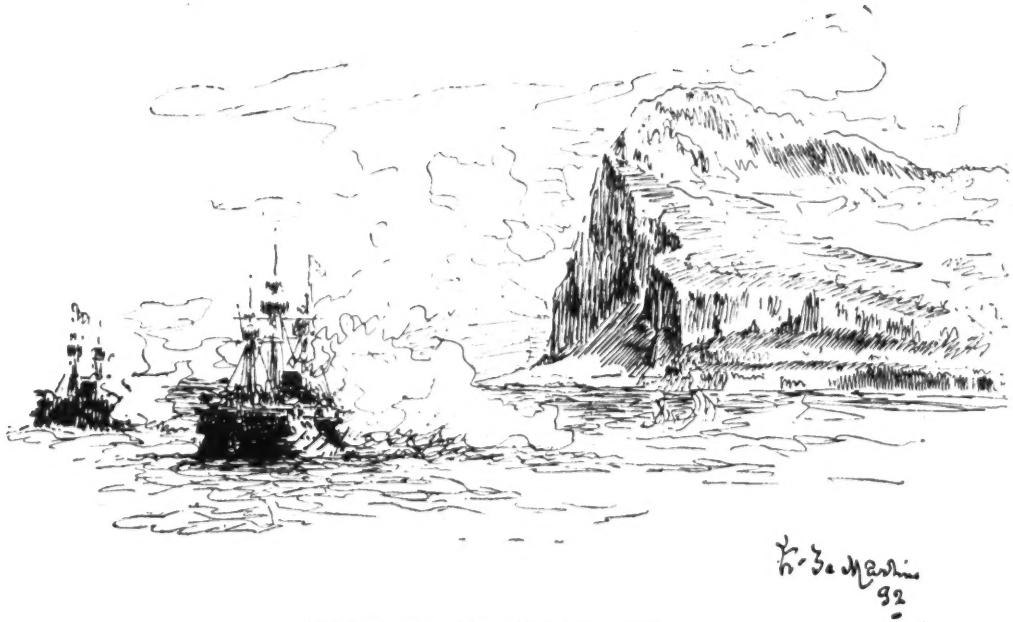
"GIBRALTAR, Tuesday, May 5th.—Last night at ten o'clock, the French Fleet having about an hour earlier renewed the bombardment, the Admiral, after consultation with the Governor, sent for the three lieutenants commanding the torpedo boats in harbour here, and explained to them that he was desirous of trying whether or not it might be possible to do damage to the enemy, but that he could not afford to risk the sacrifice of the only three boats at his disposal. He therefore asked one of the lieutenants to volunteer. All three volunteered at once. The Admiral

pointed out the great danger of the mission, and offered to allow the officers to reconsider their decision. All volunteered again. He then thanked them handsomely, but said that he could not avail himself of the services of more than one; upon which the officers, retiring for a few minutes to consider the matter, ultimately settled it by throwing poker dice. Lieutenant Penherne, of torpedo boat No. 70, won, throwing five sixes. The losers then begged to be allowed to accompany Penherne in any subordinate capacity, but this was not permitted by the Admiral, who nevertheless complimented the other lieutenants on their zeal. Penherne was ordered to wait his opportunity for going out, and, acting in accordance with his own judgment, to run into the enemy's Fleet, and do his best to torpedo one or more of their ships. With some difficulty I obtained permission to go with him.

"By a quarter to eleven we were all on board, with steam up for full speed. The enemy was at the time throwing in a very heavy fire on our batteries, which were replying steadily; and there seemed to be a good opportunity for us to get away without exciting much attention; but it was rather too light to suit Lieutenant Penherne. There was very little moon. The stars, however, were bright between the masses of scudding cloud, and he decided to wait until some heavier masses of vapour which were coming up from the westward should give him a greater degree of concealment. Knowing, as I did know, how anxious this gallant young officer was

to get at the enemy, I could not help admiring the coolness which prompted this decision. There was a brisk westerly breeze, with a short lumpy sea not altogether most suitable for torpedo boat work; but the unsuitableness of the weather would, we hoped, give us the better chances of success, by putting the enemy to some extent off his guard.

"By half-past twelve, the bombardment still continuing with full fury, Lieutenant Penherne found the sky to be much more obscured, and determined to cast off. We had lain during the previous hour and a half inside the old Mole, watched with curiosity by a small crowd of people who, though they did not know on what mission we were bound, had discovered for themselves that we were about to leave harbour. Our first movements could not greatly have enlightened them, for as soon as we were clear of the Mole head we steered straight to the westward across the Bay, as if we were making for the mouth of the Palmones. Our immediate object was to get out of the way of shells, and we succeeded, but not until we had had a very narrow escape. Scarcely had we started ere a big projectile came screeching over the Mole, sent the people flying panic-stricken, and pitched quite close to us in the water, where it burst. We were not more than twenty feet away, and part of the column of mud and water that shot up fell on us, while the waves caused by the explosion made us heel over until our port side was altogether under. But we were not damaged. Penherne had ordered all of us to put on cork belts, had seen that the machine guns



'ALL NIGHT LONG THE BOMBARDMENT CONTINUED.'

were well supplied with ammunition, had loaded all five of our torpedo tubes—after having carefully examined the torpedoes—and had had the dingy's cover removed. By this time we were under the Spanish side of the bay—very much, I am afraid, within Spanish waters. We altered our course to port, therefore, and steamed slowly down the coast, and so near to it that as we passed Algesiras Island we could see the Algesiras people, backed by the lights of their town, watching the bombardment. We could even hear—for we were sheltered by the shore, and such wind as reached us was from the right quarter—the exclamations of the crowds whenever any exceptionably loud or brilliant explosion attracted their attention. I could not resist being reminded of a fire-work night on the terrace of the Crystal Palace, though the circumstances were so terribly different. So occupied were the Spaniards that they did not seem to notice us, in spite of the fact that we passed within a couple of cables of three of their gunboats; and we went quietly on, confidently expecting to find a French cruiser, or at least a torpedo boat, waiting somewhere off Cabareta Point to upset all our plans. Surely enough we did sight a craft of some kind there, but keeping inside Pigeon Island, we avoided being noticed by her, and thus reached the open Strait. Here we altered course again, this time to starboard, and still stole along under the coast. From our new position the scene behind us was fearfully grand. The wild puffing rattle of heavy projectiles in the air was continuous. Ever and anon, high in the darkness,

there came out a red blotch of flame and silver smoke, and a minute later we heard the report of an exploded shell. More than once, several of these blotches of red flashed out almost simultaneously. Below them, on each side, tongues of flame leapt out at the rate, I should suppose, of from forty to fifty a minute. Those from the grim old Rock came from all sorts of elevations. Those from the enemy came, of course, all from the water, but were directed upwards. And against the dense bank of smoke that rolled to leeward the dark hulls of the French ships stood out clearly and plainly at every flash.

"We went westward until we were abreast of Tarifa, and until the flashes from the French ships seemed to spring up, not from dark hulls, but from the horizon. 'You must go below now,' said Lieutenant Penherne, coming slowly to me aft where I was sitting on the after conning tower. 'I will only have the fighting hands on deck. But you can get inside this conning tower if you can find room alongside the lookout there. If we get into the thick of it, I may go into the forward conning tower; but I don't yet know whether, when we are steaming at full speed, I shall be able to see anything from it; and, if I can't, I shall stay on deck, and not use the director, or anything else, but discharge the torpedoes with my own hands. Now'—with a smile—'down you tumble. England, you know, expects every man to do his duty. You have to write a dispatch, and patch us up if we get hit; so, down you tumble, and out with your stylo-

graph pen and your saws and bandages. You must cut us up on the cabin table. Let us have a look at it.'

"He led me below, and stood by, cutting up some tobacco in his palm, while I opened my instrument case and loosened my bundles of lint rolls. I recollected that between me and the enemy's shot there would be no better protection than is afforded by a steel plate about as thick as a piece of cardboard, and I admit that I felt very nervous; but Penherne was absolutely cool. When he had cut his tobacco, he said: 'Those beggars will see the spark of my pipe if I'm not careful. Can't you lend me something to cover it up?' I offered him the top of a small metal box. This he fitted to his pipe, after he had bored a few holes through the tin with the point of his knife. Then hastily cramming in the tobacco, lighting it, giving a couple of vigorous puffs, and clapping on his impromptu cover, he climbed on deck again, and, as he went up the ladder, cried, 'I hope this pipe will last me till the business is over. So long!'

"No sooner was the lieutenant on deck than he altered the boat's course again, and headed his craft right across the Strait for Al Kazar Point. It was already nearly a quarter-past two, and seeing that the sun would rise at half-past four, we had less than a couple of hours' darkness before us. But we were now steaming fast, and gradually swerving more and more to the eastward; and as, in the middle of the Strait, there is a constant current in that direction, we were making good progress. From my place in the after conning tower, I

could only see the points of Penherne's elbows as he held his night glass to his eyes, for he stood just forward of the funnel; but I heard him, from time to time, giving the order to alter course one point more to port, and I knew that we were getting up behind the French Fleet. Soon, indeed, I could see it on our port bow, still circling slowly in two divisions, with a bank of smoke to leeward, and the vivid flashes of guns and bursting shells all around it. The spray was now flying over us, and the boat was throbbing from stem to stern with the vibration of her machinery, for Penherne had clapped on full speed. Right ahead loomed a long low black mass, without lights. It must have been a French torpedo boat on the lookout. Another point to port enabled us to clear it easily. The enemy must have either not seen us, or mistaken us for one of his own boats; for there was no hail and no symptoms of alarm; and now, not two miles before us, was the leeward division of the foe's ironclads.

"Penherne laid down his glass, and stepped to the foremost broadside torpedo tubes, which were trained upon the beam. Taking the lanyards in his hands, he stood upright between them. The enemy must, by this time, have seen us, for the flames glowed above the top of our funnel, and shone on the spray that came swishing over our nose. Nearer and nearer we drew, but still there was no sign that the enemy believed anything to be wrong. His ships were circling in column of line ahead, with about three cables between the vessels; and the leader of the line—apparently a flag-

ship—was just coming round to port, after having delivered her fire, when we came within range of her. Confident that he was mistaken for a friend, Penherne altered course yet another point or two to port, as if to pass under the ironclad's stern. There was at once some indistinct shouting from the ship's bridge and poop; but Penherne did not heed it, and when he was on the enemy's quarter, and not a hundred yards from it, he pulled his right-hand lanyard, and I saw the starboard torpedo glisten for an instant as it leapt with a splash into the waves. The French, too, must have seen this, and I can only attribute the fact that they did not immediately open a heavy fire on us to the probable circumstances that the starboard guns, having just been engaged, were cooling, and so, of course, were unloaded. The second ship of the line was by this time coming up slowly on our starboard bow. Penherne shouted 'Hard-a-port!' and even as he did so, I heard the muffled explosion of our first torpedo. We swung round quickly, crossing close under the second ship's forefoot; and, while she towered over us, Penherne pulled his left lanyard and sent his second torpedo into her broad bows. The weapon had barely fifty yards to travel, and the almost instantaneous shock of its explosion jolted us up as if we had ridden over a submarine volcano, and, smashing the glass in the little scuttles of the conning tower, covered me with the fragments. But there was so much smoke, spray, and darkness that I could not see the results. 'Helm amidship!' shouted Penherne, running

aft to the other two torpedo tubes. 'Keep her steady now;' and once more steaming with wind and current, we tore across to where the rearmost ship of the French line was still firing deliberately at the Rock. She, however, ceased that fire as we approached, and devoted her whole attention to us. Her consorts also began blazing at us from almost every side; for we had placed ourselves, as it were, within the horseshoe formed by the encircling squadron. Nor was this all; the shells from Gibraltar were dropping all around us. Yet Penherne, who, at the after tubes, was quite close to me, was calm and cool. Red rents began to open in our funnel as the Hotchkiss projectiles struck it. Machine gun bullets, fired at too acute an angle to penetrate, rattled upon our deck. 'Come in, Penherne,' I cried involuntarily. 'You have done enough, in all conscience.' But he took no heed, for he was carefully training the port after tube upon the last ship. We neared her rapidly. A perfect storm of bullets swept over us, and some penetrated my tower. Penherne stumbled backwards, and, knowing that he was hit, I rushed to the companion. But as soon as my head appeared at the top of it, he sang out, 'Don't be a fool! Keep below!' and I saw that, though he now lay at full length on deck, he was watching the foe, and had the lanyard ready in his hand. I could not obey him; indeed, for a moment I could not move. We were passing the last ship's port quarter. Her side was crowded with men, who were firing at us with rifles. Penherne struggled and cried out as if with pain, and then the spell

passed away from me, and I clambered on deck and ran to him. He had the lanyard in his teeth, and, as I reached him, he raised himself with an effort, threw himself violently backward, and discharged the torpedo. 'I have done it!' he cried. And then came a roar behind us, and a blast of wind, as our third torpedo struck its mark.

"That explosion relieved us, for the last ship of the line fired no more, and we left her in the darkness.

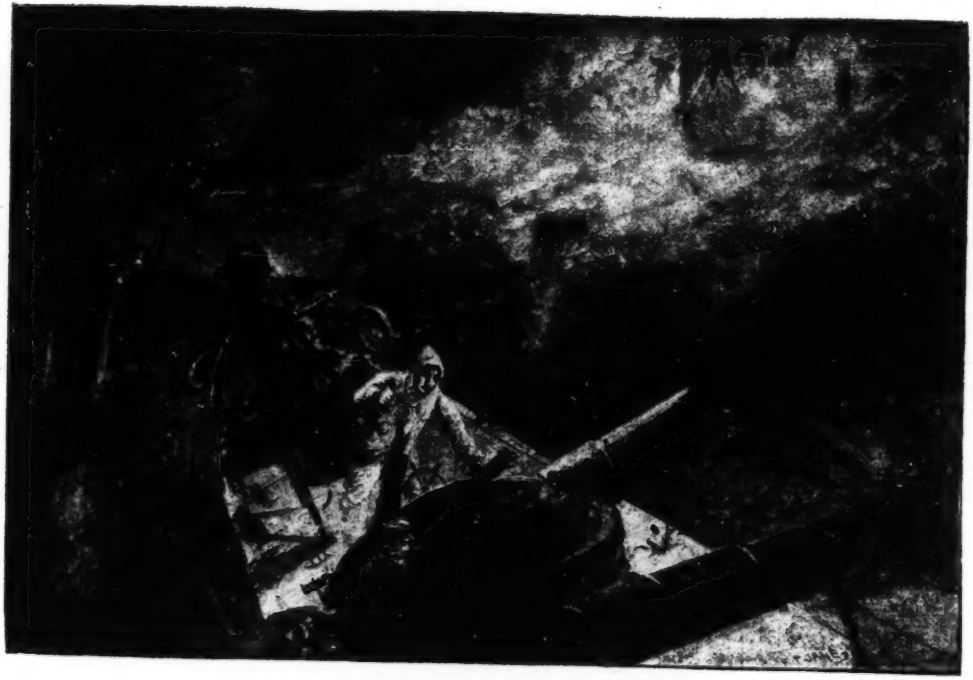
"Penherne, as gallant an officer as ever ornamented the Navy, was dead. No fewer than five bullets had struck him, and two at least had inflicted wounds, either of which would have been mortal. It was with the last ebbing remnants of his strength and consciousness that he pulled the lanyard.

"Sub-lieutenant Smith, who had been all night in the fore conning tower, and who had been wounded in the shoulder, took command of the boat, and brought her into the Bay just before sunrise. Although Lieutenant Penherne was the only person on deck while we were under fire, we have lost two bluejackets killed and five wounded, by shots which pierced the vessel's deck or sides. The boat herself has been struck by over a hundred Hotchkiss and machine gun projectiles, and has a good deal of water in her; but her engines and boilers are untouched, and she can easily be made ready for work again in a few days.

"The French temporarily drew off almost immediately after we left them. As I write, they are in sight on the other side of the Strait; but there are only eleven instead of fourteen of

E. J. Marlow

NO. 70.



"I HAVE DONE IT!"

their ironclads, and we have, therefore, the best grounds for hoping that we have disabled—if not actually sunk—three vessels. This, looking to our comparatively small loss, is very satisfactory. Yet the fall of so marvellously brave and cool an officer as Lieutenant Penherne is a heavy price to pay for success. His body has been brought ashore in the Admiral's barge, which was expressly sent for it, and it is to be buried this afternoon with all honours."

It afterwards appeared that No. 70 had actually sunk the *Victorieuse*, and had so seriously disabled the *Suffren* and *Tonnerre* as to oblige those vessels to proceed, under convoy of the *Troude* and *Lalande*, to Toulon, to be docked and repaired. This misfortune, though it did not relieve the British force at the Rock from the presence of any considerable part of the enemy, had the effect of rendering the French very shy and careful. Each night they renewed the bombardment; but not until they had first surrounded their Fleet with such a crowd of torpedo boats that undetected approach from any quarter was rendered almost hopeless. On the night of May 6th, torpedo boat No. 18 tried to steal out and repeat the exploit of No. 70, but was at once driven back by a heavy fire from some French craft which were lying in wait in the shadows on the Spanish side of the bay, where, apparently, the Spaniards were quite willing to shut their eyes to their presence. This may be explained by the fact, since discovered, that the French ambassador at Madrid, without asking for any pledges in return, secretly informed the

Spanish Government that, if Gibraltar fell into French hands, it should, upon the conclusion of hostilities, be delivered over to Spain.

Two nights later, on the night, that is, of Friday, May 8th, the French made a counter attack upon the *Trafalgar* and *Dreadnought*, which lay with their nets out, as far up the Bay as was considered safe. The *Dreadnought* was the southernmost of the two; the *Trafalgar* was two cables astern of her, and both vessels headed to the southward. Around them and outside their nets was a strong boom composed of spars and wire hawsers. It was jumpable by torpedo boats, but it was very securely moored, and was, moreover, so thoroughly fitted with ugly spikes and hooks that no boat could hope to jump it without receiving severe damage. The attack was made at about midnight by two divisions, each of six torpedo boats of the 114 ft. class. They crept in under the Spanish shore, and were unseen until they were nearly opposite Algesiras. A chance beam from one of the search-lights of the *Australia*, which lay inside the ironclads, then showed them up for an instant. The officer on the *Australia's* bridge promptly extinguished the light, and flashed to the *Trafalgar*: "Torpedo boats about to attack from direction of Algesiras." The senior officer had already directed what was to be done in the event of such an attack, and, as the night was not so dark but that the enemy, when once his position was known, could be pretty easily seen, the French were under observation some minutes before fire was opened upon them. One division attacked the

Trafalgar, and the other the *Dreadnought*. Some of the boats fired their torpedoes from outside the boom; others jumped the boom and fired afterwards. Two torpedoes exploded in rapid succession against the *Trafalgar's* nets, and three against the *Dreadnought's;* but no harm worth mentioning was done, and, in the meantime, the boats themselves were suffering awfully. Two were "hung up" on the boom; five got over it, but were almost blown to pieces when inside by the concentrated quick-firing gun fire from the ships; and all these five were sunk. The two on the boom struck their flags and called for quarter, and the remaining five either got away to the French Fleet or were run ashore on the neutral ground to save them from foundering. The loss on the side of the attack was, in addition to the loss of boats, at least sixty men killed or wounded; while the defence escaped with only two men wounded.

This ill-judged but pluckily executed onslaught had been covered by an unusually hot fire from the French Fleet, which on perceiving that the attack had wholly failed, drew off for the rest of the night, and was not anywhere visible in the morning. The garrison's hopes that it had gone elsewhere were, however, disappointed, for on the evening of the 9th the bombardment was resumed with greater fury than ever; and for several nights afterwards it was continued. It was only temporarily interrupted by an incident, an account of which will be found in the next chapters.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SAILING OF THE "MARY ROSE."

T is true that Mr. Thomas Bowling was engaged to be married to Mary Rose, youngest daughter of Admiral Sir Taffrail Stormer, G.C.B. That may be why he renamed the *Valdivia* the *Mary Rose*, but, on the other hand, it may not; for, for nearly four hundred years, *Mary Rose* has been a good old ship-name in the Royal Navy of England, and it is a name as historically venerable as *Dragon* or *Lion*, and more so than *Royal Sovereign*, *Antelope*, *Unicorn*, *Falcon*, *Phœnix*, *Triumph*, or *Victory*. A *Mary Rose*, of 600 tons, capsized during the action with the French at Spithead in 1545, and from fifty years before that time until the close of the last century, there was nearly always a *Mary Rose* in the Navy List. Moreover, when she figured there, she generally figured there to some effect.

One thing, however, is certain. Sir Taffrail, accompanied by his daughter, ran down to Newcastle while the ship was preparing for sea, and lunched with Bowling in his half-fitted cabin; and there being on the luncheon table an unopened

bottle of champagne, Bowling carried it on to the forecastle, and persuaded Miss Stormer to fling it against the gilt scroll-work on the cruiser's bows, and to say: "I re-christen you *Mary Rose*." All of which she did very prettily, and with many smiles and some blushes.

That was on Wednesday, May 6th, the day preceding the night on which torpedo boat No. 18 made the unsuccessful attempt to get out of Gibraltar and attack the French Fleet. All that day and all the following night the Elswick people worked like bees on board; and next morning Bowling, who had scarcely taken off his clothes, or even slept, for four days, was able to telegraph to London, "I shall be ready to sail this evening." Later in the day he had the satisfaction of receiving a private dispatch from Sir Humphrey Thornbeigh. In the meantime, the ship took on board her shell and her ammunition, including, for all weapons, cordite as well as ordinary powder.

Bowling had succeeded in collecting a much better ship's company than he had dared to hope for. Germany and America, and, indeed, nearly all countries, had issued formal proclamations of neutrality, but these did not prevent a certain number of excellent German and American seamen from shipping with him; and some of each nationality had, he was delighted to find, served in their own navies, and, if not quite up to his standard of what bluejackets should be, knew what man-of-war discipline was, and had a certain acquaintance with modern guns and modern conditions.

He obtained most of his engine-room staff with much less difficulty than he had anticipated. The slower merchant steamers, harassed by the numerous fast cruisers which the French Government chartered, armed, and sent to sea immediately after the outbreak of war, had already begun to lie up, and, although the Admiralty took over many of their engineers and stokers, Bowling managed, with the assistance of agents at Hull, Glasgow, and Liverpool, to engage all he wanted, and even to pick and choose a little. His chief engineer, a rugged Scot named Macpherson, had volunteered into one of the Congressional ships during the Civil War of 1891 in Chili, and had then, on more than one occasion, evinced his complete coolness and his fulness of resource. He came, surrounded by a legend, which he professed to laugh at as utterly baseless, that once, when a shell burst in his engine-room, causing a frightful outburst of steam, he ordered all his juniors away, went in alone, shut off everything, and was found so badly burnt as to have his life despaired of: but the frightful white scars with which his hands and face were nearly covered lent probability to the story, and helped to inspire a confidence, which, it may be said at once, was never misplaced.

Bowling saw no necessity for cutting loose from all the traditions in which he had been brought up. He therefore assumed for himself the title of captain, and gave his executive officers the title of lieutenant. The *Mary Rose's* staff, when completed, and set down as it would have been

had the cruiser been one of Her Majesty's ships in the Navy List, was:—Captain, Thomas Bowling (late R.N.); lieutenant, John K. Maintruck, R.N. (retired); lieutenant (N), Benjamin Binnacle, R.N. (retired); lieutenant (G), Henry B. Tompion, R.N. (retired); lieutenant (T), James Water Tripper (late R.N.); lieutenant, Frederick Day; lieutenant, William Salthorse, R.N. (retired); surgeon, Arthur Rhubarb, M.D.; paymaster, Noah Nipcheese, R.N. (retired); chief engineer, Alexander Macpherson; sub-lieutenant, Henry Echo (late R.N.A.V.); gunner, George Prism Brown (late R.N.); boatswain, Benedict Tiller (late R.N.); carpenter, Michael Plane.

There were also, of course, subordinate engineer officers, and there were three young gentlemen, Messrs. Williams, Roberts, and Harris, who had been senior cadets in the *Worcester* or the *Conway*, and who, at the urgent request of their parents, who were retired naval officers without interest, were permitted to join the *Mary Rose* as midshipmen. Each of these had had a little experience at sea in a merchant ship.

Mr. Maintruck was an admirable all round officer, whose only service fault was that he had no influential friends. He had seen service in all parts of the world, and after having been twenty-two years a lieutenant, had been obliged, on the score of age, to retire. Like several of his fellow lieutenants, he insisted upon sinking his seniority in favour of Bowling. He was a somewhat old-fashioned man in his notions, and, in common with Mr. Salthorse, who was very little

his junior, he affected greatly to regret the days of masts and sails, and to think that modern naval officers were very indifferent seamen. With these supposed opinions of the two old lieutenants Mr. Binnacle agreed. They were really his opinions, though not really theirs. He fervently believed that seamanship and navigation, save in so far as they were preserved in his own person, were nearly lost arts. They merely grumbled as a matter of principle, and in their hearts —although they would never admit it—were staunch admirers of what is called "new navy." Mr. Tompion and Mr. Tripper were thorough-going scientific officers of the modern school. Tompion had fallen in love, and retired in order to marry; but, having retired, had almost immediately lost his inamorata, who had faithlessly married a subaltern in the Buffs. This blow, while it had soured Tompion so far as the whole fair sex was concerned, had rendered him more than ever devoted to his lost profession; and he had therefore seized with avidity the opportunity of going afloat again. Tripper had, in a moment of disgust, retired in order to become manager to a firm which promised, in its prospectus, to provide the world with a torpedo of a new and subtle dirigible type; but the company having collapsed before its torpedo had been adopted by any government, Tripper had found himself thrown without occupation upon his own resources. The Admiralty, annoyed at losing him, had insisted upon his returning his commission, and had thus surrendered all claim upon his services. Otherwise, no doubt, their Lordships would

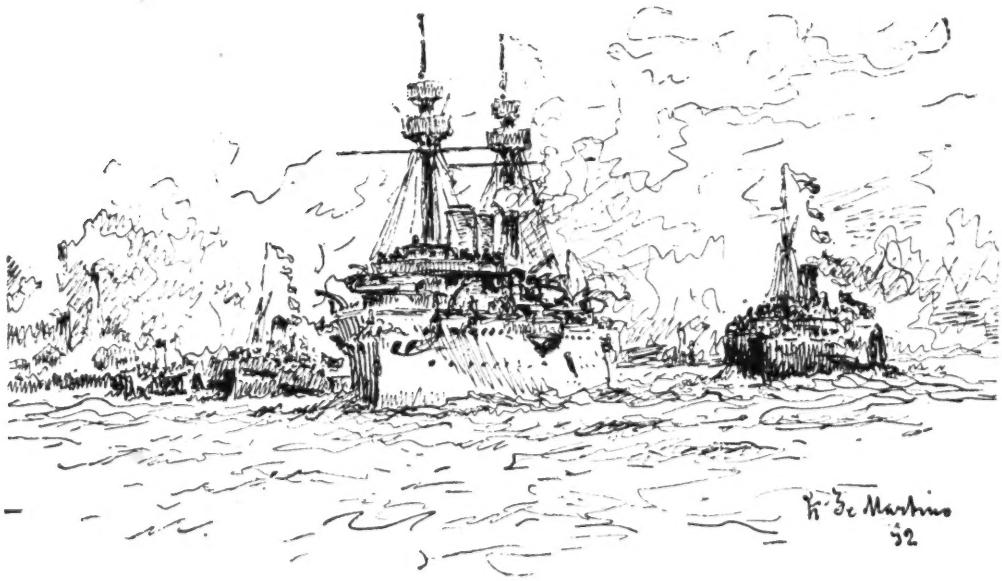
have been glad enough to get back so good a torpedo officer.

Mr. Day, barrister-at-law, has already been introduced to the reader as a determined amateur yachtsman. Salthorse declared that he would not join the *Mary Rose* at all unless he was allowed to join as junior lieutenant; for he urged that he had not been to sea for many years, and, in the quasi-retirement of a coast-guard billet, had grown very rusty. Thus it was that he ranked junior even to Day; although in his time he had been first lieutenant of an ironclad in the Channel, and of a guardship in one of the Scottish ports, and had commanded a gunboat on the West Coast. His modesty met its reward in the respect with which he was regarded by everyone on board.

Dr. Rhubarb was a civilian, young and enthusiastic, and a clever surgeon as well as a learned physician. He threw up a rapidly-growing London practice in order to accompany Bowling; and, as he was a bachelor, no one had a right to prevent him. Mr. Nipcheese, the oldest officer in the ship, was a gentleman who sincerely believed that the bone and marrow of the Royal Navy was represented by the accountant branch of the service, and this being his opinion, he was, of course, although retired, a very superior person in his own estimation, and invariably behaved himself as such, except, on occasions, after dinner, when, if he had been able to lay hands on any Madeira, he would sleep in the ward-room with his feet on the stove, and by turns snore and mumble inco-

herencies, some of which sounded suspiciously like blasphemies, aimed, however, at nobody and nothing in particular. He would sometimes, when awake, unbend sufficiently to listen to a good story, and even to smile at it in a superior kind of way; but he was never known to tell one. Mr. Echo, by profession a barrister, was a keen officer of a type which was by no means uncommon in the unfortunate Royal Naval Artillery Volunteers. He was an enthusiastic all-round yachtsman, and had, moreover, devoted full attention to gunnery work. Ever since the disbandment of his corps he had continued to keep himself *au courant* with naval matters, in hope that some day the R.N.A.V. would be re-established. He was fully equal to a lieutenant's duties, he was smart and tireless, he volunteered to do any work for which a volunteer was required, and his good nature and ingenuous character rendered him a general favourite. Of Mr. Brown and Mr. Tiller it need only be said that they were pensioned warrant officers, barely over fifty, and as good as the Navy has ever produced. As for Mr. Plane, he had been carpenter in a crack Cunarder, and belonged to the Royal Naval Reserve.

Thursday, May 7th, when the *Mary Rose* sailed, was a great day on the Tyne. Sir Taffrail Stormer and his daughter lunched on board again, and remained by the ship until she had dropped down to the Narrows, below North Shields, where they were put on board one of the several tugs and steamers that had come out to bid the cruiser good-bye. As they went over the side, Tompion, who was on the bridge, heaved a sigh of relief.



THE "MARY ROSE" ESCORTED OUT OF THE TYNE.

"I beg your pardon, sir?" said Echo.

"Oh! I didn't say anything," answered the gunnery lieutenant; "I was only pleased to see the last of that little petticoat. I was half afraid that the skipper wouldn't be able to cast off from it. Thank heaven! That's gone! A ship is never a ship while there's a petticoat on board."

Bowling was shaking hands with the Admiral at the starboard gangway. "And look here, Bowling," said Sir Taffrail, "if, with a ship like this under you, you don't come back a bigger man than you sail, I shall think that the Admiralty dealt with you as you deserved. And remember, she shan't marry a man who's not in the service. My father was in the service and my grandfather. I'm in the service, and my son-in-law is to be in the service, and I'll have my grandsons in the service if I live to have a word to say to their mother. God bless you, my boy." And the Admiral, very red in the face, went over the side after his daughter, sat down in the sternsheets of the boat which was to carry him to the tug, took the tiller-lines, swore at the crew, just as if Miss Stormer had been a hundred miles away, and, when he thought he was unobserved, brushed a tear from his eye, and muttered, "God bless him!" in so loud and angry a tone that the men at the oars thought that the objurgations had begun anew, and pulled as if his Satanic Majesty himself was coxing them. Mary Rose, who had stood up to wave her handkerchief to Bowling, was capsized by the suddenly-increased impetus of the boat, and fell upon her father's knees, whereupon the

Admiral picked her up very tenderly, placed her at his side, and frowned around him as if to say: "Who dares to tell me that the daughter of Sir Taffrail Stormer, G.C.B., can't stand up in a boat and wave a handkerchief? If there be any such person, let me get at him."

It is therefore fortunate that he did not hear Tompion's ungallant exclamation to Echo: "There, didn't I tell you so? Serves her right, poor little beggar, for not having stayed on shore."

Bowling ran up to the bridge as soon as his friends were fairly away. In the pleasure of having so fine a ship as the *Mary Rose* under his command, he forgot alike the disappointment of his removal from the Navy, the personal sacrifices which he had made, the terribly hard work of the past week, and the pain of parting with the girl he loved. He felt that untold possibilities were within his grasp; he believed that, while he might render his country splendid services, he might also reinstate himself. And it was in the highest spirits that he took command, ordered full speed ahead, and steamed out against the salt breeze of the North Sea—the first English privateer to leave a British port in the service of Sovereign and country for many a long year. But he was not only in the service of Sovereign and country; he was in the service also of himself and his fellow-owners of the *Mary Rose*, and it was his business as much to make prizes from as to do damage to the foe. He was, moreover, to some extent in the service of Sir Humphrey Thornbeigh personally;

for, but for Sir Humphrey, the ship could not have been officered as she was. Bowling was beginning to congratulate himself that, though he was serving so many interests, he was still mainly his own master—when he recollected that, enclosed with Sir Humphrey's dispatch of that day, there was a sealed envelope marked, "To be opened only after you have left port. Private and confidential. On Her Majesty's service."

He took the dispatch from his pocket, and, pulling out the envelope, opened it. Within were a letter and another envelope, the latter being addressed to the Admiral-Superintendent, Malta Dockyard. Bowling read the letter, which ran:—

"MY DEAR BOWLING,—I haven't the least idea where you are going to cruise or what you propose to attempt, and it is not my business to inquire; but *if you find yourself in the Mediterranean*, and will deliver this, you may render the country *and yourself* a considerable service. Of course I am taking other measures to get the letter, a copy of which I enclose, delivered at Malta; but the enemy seems to be holding the Strait pretty closely, and my messengers may not get through, while you may. I don't advise you one way or another. You have duties to yourself and to your owners. But the Mediterranean used to be a fine privateer's cruising ground, and may be so still, and *there's honour to be gained there*. You have all my good wishes, and I suspect you will not disappoint them. But, again I say, remember your duties to

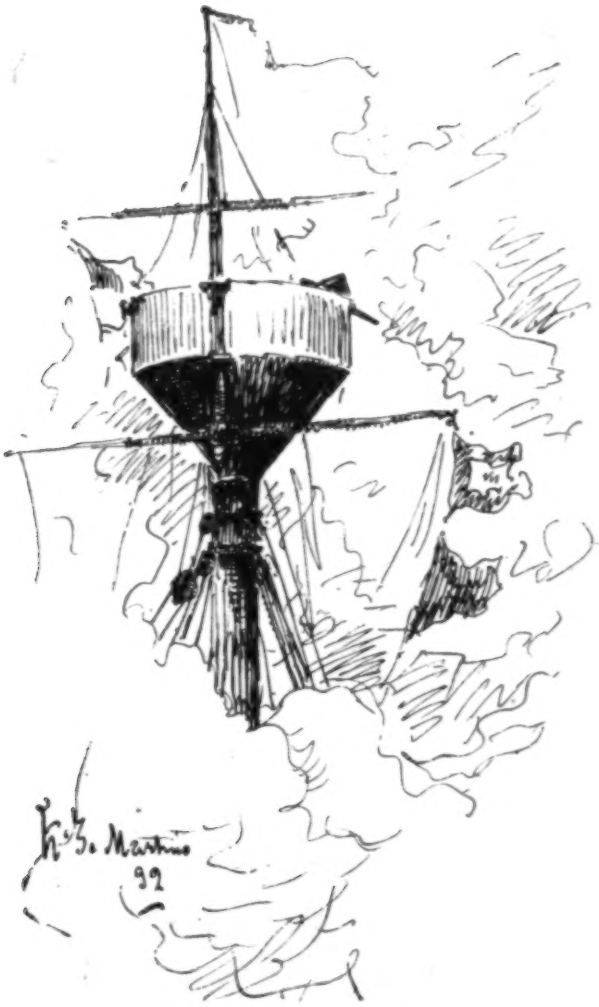
your owners and *yourself*, and don't be influenced by your sincere friend,—H. T."

Bowling whistled and gazed up speculatively at the foretop, over which peeped the covered muzzle of a gun. "He wants me to go to Malta," thought he, and yet he doesn't want to formally advise me to do so. I should surely pick up more prizes in the Channel. But Uncle Humphrey has something in the wind, and, if I don't take his suggestions, I feel that I shall be a fool. He's not the man to throw out these hints without an object; nor is he the man to mislead me. He has helped me, so, by Jove, if I can possibly see my way to it, I'll help him. But how we shall get into the Mediterranean, heaven only knows!"

He thrust the papers back into his pocket, and looking round and seeing that the ship had by this time steamed well clear of the river's mouth, he ordered the course to be altered eight points to starboard.

It was nearly three bells, and the sun was setting over the land in a blinding blaze of golden splendour. The sea was perfectly smooth; such light breeze as there was came from the north-west, and the ship came round so gently and sped southward so quietly that it was difficult to believe that she was making even the 10 knots which the captain had ordered.

"Running at this speed, when shall we be off Dover, Mr. Binnacle?" asked Bowling of the second lieutenant, who stood by his side.



"THE FORETOP OVER WHICH PEAPED THE COVERED MUZZLE OF A GUN."

Mr. Binnacle went into the chart-house, set to work with his ruler and dividers, and in half a minute came out again, touching his cap, with the reply, "At about three o'clock to-morrow afternoon, sir."

"Thank you; very good. Messenger, run down and ask the chief engineer to be so good as to speak to me."

A boy who was in waiting sprang down the ladder, and very speedily Mr. Macpherson came upon the bridge.

"She runs very easily," said Bowling. "We will keep her at ten knots for the present. But I should like steam, if you please, for seventeen knots at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning, and after that time you must be prepared, until further orders, to use forced draught, if necessary, while we are running down the Channel. Is everything going well below?"

"Couldn't go better, sir," said the chief. "I never had better engines."

"Very good, Mr. Macpherson; I won't try them more than I can help. Thank you."

"We must make shift to get the men smart with the guns, Mr. Maintruck," said Bowling. "They must be practised at general quarters as much as possible, and I shall go to night quarters to-night, though you needn't let anyone know it. I don't want to tire out the crew, and I hope they will understand that; but we are all rather fresh to our work, and we have no time to waste. Who knows whether we shan't have to fight an action to-morrow? So we must lose no opportunities. Perhaps you will be so good as to speak to Mr. Tompion

on the subject. For the present I don't see how we can manage to run any torpedoes; but you may tell Mr. Tripper that I shall bear him in mind, and give him a chance when I can."

Mr. Tompion needed no inciting to duty. Assisted by the gunner, he had long since made out his quarter bill, and had already exercised his men at the guns, though, of course, he had not yet been able to fire, except on the morning of the 5th, when the ship had been out to test her gun-mountings. In all departments the regular sea-routine of a man-of-war was observed, and it was astonishing with how little friction the men fell into their places, and how rapidly things settled down. From the first the ship was kept partially cleared for action, and the guns were always loaded; but, as all the guns were on the upper-deck, where there was but little protection from the weather, Bowling did not think it necessary to make the men sleep at their quarters. That night, at half-past eleven, he went up on to the bridge and ordered the ship to general quarters, and when less than four and a half minutes later everything was reported ready, he felt that he had with him the material for an extraordinarily smart ship's company, and that it would be very bad policy on his part either to unnecessarily expose, or to unnecessarily weary, a very willing crew.

There were no further alarms during the night. The sun rose at about twenty minutes past four, but already Mr. Maintruck was busy on deck; and all the morning, with but rare intervals, drills of one kind or another were going on.

At ten, Bowling ordered targets to be dropped, and then exercised his guns' crews for an hour at firing at a mark. The practice, especially with the 4·7-in. guns, was much better than could fairly be expected, but naturally it was not very brilliant. In all directions, however, there were signs of improvement, and as officers and men alike were exceedingly keen, the captain was more than satisfied. Soon after three in the afternoon, the speed having already for some hours been increased to nearly 17 knots, the ship was off Dover, and exchanged signals with the shore. Bowling altered course very little, and headed diagonally across the Strait, making for the direction of Havre, so that by ten o'clock at night he was off the mouth of the Seine. Many craft of all kinds were sighted in the Channel, but very little attention was paid to them. They were chiefly British and German vessels, and the captain's immediate idea was to leave as quickly as possible those waters, in which he could not expect to encounter something well worth the trouble of capturing. Both Mr. Echo and the carpenter knew almost every steamer that traversed the Atlantic. Bowling therefore ordered them to keep watch and watch on the bridge that night, and having altered course to the westward, reduced his speed to 10 knots, and began to look out for a homeward-bound French liner.

The French Government, with marvellous promptitude, had issued as early as April 30th a code of private signals, copies of which had been given to all outward-bound vessels leaving French ports on and after that date. Captains were directed

to communicate with all French ships which they might meet at sea, apprise them of the outbreak of war, and deliver to them a copy of the signals. They were directed also to sink or destroy the signal-books in the event of their capture being probable; and, as the adoption of these measures had been reported in England several days before the sailing of the *Mary Rose*, Bowling felt pretty confident that, although hostilities were less than a fortnight old, he would have to depend, not upon ruse, but upon speed and force, for any prize which he might be so fortunate to make. While, therefore, reducing his speed to ten knots, he still kept steam for seventeen.

Day and Echo relieved Salthorse and the carpenter at midnight. There was a clear moon, and the sea was still smooth. The dark mass of Cape La Hogue was visible to the south-west, and behind it Alderney was just opening out, like a black cloud upon a field of silver.

Day took his station on the bridge; Echo, glass in hand, climbed into the foretop, and had not been there more than a quarter of an hour when he hailed Day with the information that he had sighted three sail in company, at a distance of about eight miles on the port bow, coming up Channel, one, at least, being evidently a big passenger vessel.

Day went into the chart-house and roused the captain, who was sleeping there as best he could, coiled up on some bunting and coats in a corner. Bowling was upon his legs and wide awake in a moment, and, in half a minute more, was in the top by Echo's side. He had no difficulty in perceiving

the strangers, though he could not make out what they were.

"One of them looks uncommonly like the *Normandie* of the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, sir," ventured Echo.

"And one is a man-of-war, if I'm not mistaken," added the captain; "and not one of ours either. Keep your eyes open, Mr. Echo, and report all their movements." And Bowling scrambled down again, and mounted to the top of the chart-house, where he was not too far removed from the bridge to be able to give his orders. No sooner was he there than he directed the crew to be sounded off to quarters. Almost at the same moment two rockets went up from the centre ship of the three, and glittered for a second against the dark blue of the sky. This was clearly a private night-signal, for several lights were also shown, and then suddenly extinguished.

"Full speed, if you please, Mr. Day," shouted Bowling, keeping his glass on the strangers, "and keep her a point nearer in." Day gave the necessary directions to the engine-room and to the quartermaster at the wheel, but, by that time, Mr. Maintruck and Mr. Binnacle, both looking very sleepy, were on the bridge, and he was free to go to his station at the quick-firing guns aft.

The strangers, who had clearly been making for Havre, altered course a little when their signal was not answered, and seemed to be about to attempt to get into Cherbourg; but, as Cherbourg was already broad on the port beam of the *Mary Rose*, they soon recognised this as hopeless, and, rounding

Alderney, headed southward for St. Malo or Cancale Bay. The one which looked like the *Normandie* took station ahead, and the one which looked like a man-of-war took station astern, the three vessels thus steaming in column. In ten minutes' time they were shut out from view by the land, but already it was plain that the *Mary Rose* was rapidly gaining on them.

The three ships were, in fact, the *Normandie*, 6217 tons, homeward-bound from New York; the *Paraguay*, 3450 tons, homeward-bound from South America, and owned by the Chargeurs Réunis; and the cruiser *Duguay-Trouin*, of the French navy. The cruiser, detached from the Division Legère de l'Atlantique, had been sent to the mouth of the Channel to look out for homeward-bound ships, and to see them safely into port, and, having fallen in with the *Normandie* and *Paraguay* almost simultaneously off Ushant on the previous afternoon, was convoying them at the speed of thirteen knots —all that the *Paraguay* could manage—to Havre, which was their normal destination.

In an hour the privateer rounded the cape, and enjoyed once more a view of the chase. At half-past two the *Mary Rose* was off Cap de Flamanville, and was well within gunshot of the cruiser, which still kept station at the rear of the column.

"She has a lot of guns, sir," said Tompion, who, for a few minutes, had been consulting a book by the light of the binnacle lantern. "There are five 6·4-in. and five 5·4-in., besides

"GIVE HER THE TOP O'HER, GUS."

four quick-firers, and five revolving cannon; and she has a couple of torpedo tubes stowed somewhere."

"I'm glad that you know so much about her. Probably she can't make head or tail of us. If she be really the *Duguay-Trouin*, as you make out, I ought to know something about her myself, for I lunched on board her some years ago at Brest. She's an iron ship, with no protection whatever, and we could blow her out of the water. Now, I'm going to pass her, Mr. Tompion; and if she doesn't fire at me, I shan't fire at her. I want the other ships first."

But the gallant Frenchman had determined to make an effort to save his charges. Just then the *Duguay-Trouin* yawed a little, and, at about two thousand yards, fired as much of her port broadside as would bear at the *Mary Rose*. No projectile struck, but the spray from more than one splashed across the privateer's deck.

"Give her the bow 9·4-in. gun, Mr. Tompion," said Bowling. "I don't want to sink her; but perhaps you can disable her screw or steering gear. Don't fire, however, until we are a little closer to her. Let the men lie down, Mr. Maintruck. And, by the way, Mr. Tompion, please keep the starboard midship gun trained on her as we come up on her quarter."

Again the *Duguay-Trouin* yawed to port, and delivered her broadside. A storm of projectiles shrieked past the *Mary Rose's* bridge; a few splinters flew from the wood-work of the chart-house; and a shell burst harmlessly against the base of the sponson of the starboard barbette. Had the officers

remained on the bridge, some of them would doubtless have been hit, but, at the first sign of the enemy's yawing, Bowling had made them take shelter behind the conning tower.

The privateer was now coming up so rapidly that the Frenchman dared not again yaw to port for fear of being rammed; but he began to circle round to starboard, so as to bring his starboard broadside to bear; whereupon Bowling ordered the two big barbette guns, of which he had already spoken, to be fired. They were discharged almost simultaneously at the cruiser's stern; and, when the smoke had cleared away, it was evident that at least one of them had spoken with effect, for the enemy's mizzen topmast was seen to have toppled over her starboard quarter, and to be hanging with all its hamper in such a position that, as the cruiser continued to circle, it must infallibly foul her screw. And this is indeed what happened a minute later.

But the *Duguay-Trouin*, though temporarily disabled, did not cease to fire as the privateer passed under her stern, and beyond her, in hot chase of the convoy.

"Leave her alone for the present," said Bowling; "I intend to pass the next ship, and stop the leading one. Don't use the big guns again without orders. We can tackle these gentlemen with the small quick-firers and machine guns."

The *Paraguay*, the centre ship, was easily overhauled and passed; but the *Normandie*, having increased her speed to 15 knots, was not so easily come up with, and she was off St. Catherine's Bay, Jersey, ere the *Mary*

THE "MARY ROSE" AND PRIZES ENTERING PLYMOUTH SOUND.

Rose ran alongside her and hailed her to strike. She of course had no alternative; and Bowling, having hastily lowered a couple of boats and put Mr. Williams, an assistant engineer, and five-and-twenty well-armed men on board of her, returned to look after the other ships. The *Paraguay*, immediately after having been passed, had altered her course sixteen points and fled again to the northward. The *Duguay-Trouin* had made sail, but the wind being light she had scarcely moved, and before daybreak the privateer was once more within shot of her. Bowling fired a gun across her bows, whereupon she replied with a broadside, which did a little damage and wounded three men; but a couple of well-aimed rounds, at 750 yards, from the privateer's 9·4-in. guns, brought the French captain to his senses; and at a quarter-past four, being on fire and having thirty men killed or wounded by the bursting of a shell in his battery, he surrendered. Lieutenant Tripper and fifty men went on board and took possession; 150 of the cruiser's crew were for safety's sake removed into the *Mary Rose*, and the *Paraguay* having got into Cherbourg and given the alarm, Bowling and his two prizes made the best of their way to Plymouth, where they dropped anchor soon after noon on Saturday, May 9th.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FORCING OF THE STRAITS.

PLYMOUTH Sound was a scene of great bustle and activity, and it was by no means easy for a ship like the *Mary Rose*, which had no claim upon the services of a single man in the place, to get anything done. By nightfall, however, Bowling had not only handed over his two prizes to the proper authorities for adjudication, and communicated his directions to his agents concerning the vessels, but had filled up with coal, and put to sea again.

To make up for the time which he had lost, he steamed out of the soundings at a speed of fifteen knots, and, heading for Cape Finisterre, determined for the present to think no more of making any prizes beyond those which he could not do without. By breakfast time on the morning of the 10th he had passed Brest without sighting any French warship, and very early on the morning of the 11th, Cape Finisterre was visible, distant about ten miles on the port beam. That evening at sunset, in lovely weather, the privateer passed Lisbon, and on the morning of the 12th she was in the latitude of the Straits, but about two hundred miles to the westward.

Bowling had decided to run at all hazards into the Mediterranean, but he was not disposed to attempt so bold an undertaking without first replenishing all his coal bunkers. He knew that, if he got through the French Fleet that was engaged at Gibraltar, he would probably be chased, and he had no mind to be taken owing to lack of fuel. He therefore reduced his speed to 10 knots, hoisted French colours, and, keeping a little outside those waters which he felt were likely to be patrolled by the French scouts and cruisers, he set to work to look for a vessel that would serve his turn.

She came sooner than Bowling had ventured to hope. That afternoon at about six o'clock a trampish-looking steamer was sighted, labouring along, at a speed of between seven and eight knots, from the southward. The *Mary Rose* passed close to her and hailed her, and her skipper, a little old man whose face was of the texture and almost of the colour of a dried raisin, replied in French that his ship was the *Gédéon*, of Rochefort, homeward-bound from Gabon with a cargo of palm oil, copal, and caoutchouc. The man was ordered to heave to, and Day, who spoke French like a native, went with a boat's crew to him.

The dried skipper met Day at the gangway, and unsuspectingly informed him that he had heard down the coast some rumours of war. "Were they," he asked, "true?"

Day told him that they were quite true, and that a French Fleet was at that moment busy in an attack upon Gibraltar, whereat the Frenchman looked very proud and happy.

"But there are a great many English cruisers about," continued Day; "and if you don't look very sharp, you'll be snapped up before you get into the Charente. Are you steaming so slowly because you are short of coal?"

"Oh, no," said the man; "I have plenty of coal. The reason is that I can't steam any faster. But come to my cabin and take a glass of wine, and let us drink to the confusion of these English."

"I'm much obliged to you," replied Day; "but really it isn't wine, but coal, that I've come in search of. That ship is an English privateer, and. . . ."

The Frenchman's face grew black. "This is a trap, then?" he asked.

"As you please. You perceive that my ship is now flying her own colours. You cannot escape from her. You must therefore allow her to take such coal as she requires."

"I will allow nothing of the sort. Quit my deck, sir!" And the little dried man assumed an attitude so well expressive of the direst and most contemptuous wrath that he looked positively noble.

"My ship will take you in tow," said Day, not replying to the Frenchman's outburst.

"Never!" cried the little man; and flying at Day, he flung his arms round the lieutenant's waist as if he intended to heave him overboard.

Day's men were all in the boat; and therefore, although he could have very easily tackled the irate master mariner alone,

the officer was at a great disadvantage when a couple of stalwart Frenchmen sprang forward to reinforce their chief. Day lost his glasses, without which he was as blind as a bat; but he was too proud to cry for help, and he struggled manfully against the overwhelming odds; until at last, hot, dishevelled, and angry, he found himself tied ignominiously to the bitts at the foot of the steamer's mizzen.

During this time Day's boat alongside was hanging on, and suspecting no evil.

"Now, sir," said the French skipper to the prisoner, "I will give your friends coal. Ho, there, François and Jacques! Go below and bring up the largest and finest piece of coal you can find."

Day bit his lip, but said nothing. "They must see me from the cruiser," he thought; but he was so short-sighted that he did not perceive that the bulwarks of the *Gédéon* were too high for anyone on the bridge of the *Mary Rose* in her then position to be able to see over them. In a couple of minutes François and Jacques appeared, staggering beneath a lump of coal which may have weighed nearly a hundredweight.

"*C'est beau, ce gros bloc, n'est ce pas?*" asked the French skipper, with a leer. "*Croyez-vous que ça suffira? Moi je le crois bien. Essayons-nous! Dégouttez moi ce charbon dans le canot de monsieur. 'Suis etonné qu'on envoie un canot si fragile pour une telle cargaison. Vite! Laissez tomber!*"

And before poor Day, with his bad sight, had realised what was in the wind, François and Jacques had hoisted the coal

over the bulwarks and dropped it clean through the bottom of the *Mary Rose's* boat.

It has been noted that the crew of the privateer was drawn from several nationalities. Cosmopolitan, in consequence, was the bad language which, as the boat filled and sunk, arose from the men who were left floundering in the water. Bowling, from the *Mary Rose's* bridge, saw what had happened, and at once ordered out another boat, but long before it was under way for the *Gédéon* the men from the water had by some means managed to scramble up to the Frenchman's deck, to send the little dried skipper sprawling, to release Day, and to haul down the tricolour. No one but the French captain dreamt of resisting.

By this time the privateer had come under the Frenchman's stern, and Bowling was able to see for himself how matters were going. "Send a hawser to us, Mr. Day," he cried, "and we will take you in tow. You shouldn't have let yourself be caught napping in that way. Ha! ha! No one is any the worse, I hope. Can you take charge of her?"

Day, who had recovered his glasses, and who, with them on his nose, was equal to anything, sang out, "Aye, aye, sir! No one hurt!" and sent the end of the hawser, by the second boat, to the *Mary Rose*, which in a few minutes passed ahead, and, with the Frenchman in her wake, steamed off to the south-east.

By daybreak next morning the privateer and her prize were off the mouth of the Wadi Gloug, a little stream which

comes down from the mountains of Morocco and enters the Atlantic about twenty miles to the southward of El Araish. There, in seven fathoms, Bowling anchored, and, having brought the *Gédéon* alongside, set to work to take out of her as much coal as his own ship could hold. He adopted the precaution of putting the *Gédéon* outside the *Mary Rose*, so that, if he were attacked while coaling, his prize would afford him some protection, while he, in consequence of his superior height out of the water, could fire over her. But he was not disturbed. A few boats from the wretched shore came off, and curiously observed what was going forward. Others brought fish, milk, fruits, and vegetables for sale. The natives, however, seemed to know nothing of the war, and to realise the existence of no difference between British and French; and if the *Mary Rose* had arrived to seize their country they would apparently have been equally ready to do a little trade with her; for even in that far-away spot Her Majesty's image, on a gold or silver coin, was recognised and duly honoured. In the meantime Lieutenant Tripper was able to try most of his torpedoes.

Bowling invited the French skipper to breakfast with him; and the honest man, who felt that he had done all that duty and patriotism demanded, graciously accepted.

"I don't know what to do with your ship," said Bowling. "It seems barbarous to set you and your men ashore on such a place as this, and to scuttle the *Gédéon;* but I don't see any alternative."

"I am your prisoner, sir," said the skipper, "and I can do nothing, but I warn you that my country will amply avenge this insult."

"Yes, I know. And of course, if I were to let you go, you would, as soon as possible, find out the nearest French cruiser and set her on my track."

"I should have that honour," assented the little Frenchman.

"Then I can't let you go; that's all. You must remain here!"

"Sir! It is an outrage, an indignity, a barbarism, a piracy!"

"I can't help it. I'm very sorry. Will you remain here ashore or afloat?"

"Sir, you may put me ashore and destroy my ship. That is as you please! But if you leave me master of my ship, nothing shall prevent me from steaming as fast as possible to denounce your dastardly interference with me—your unheard of robbery."

Bowling touched the bell at his elbow, and, when his servant appeared, sent to beg the chief engineer to speak to him.

"I want to know, Mr. Macpherson," he said, when that officer arrived, "whether, without doing the *Gédéon* any permanent damage, you can so deal with her engines that she shall be unable to move from here for a week?"

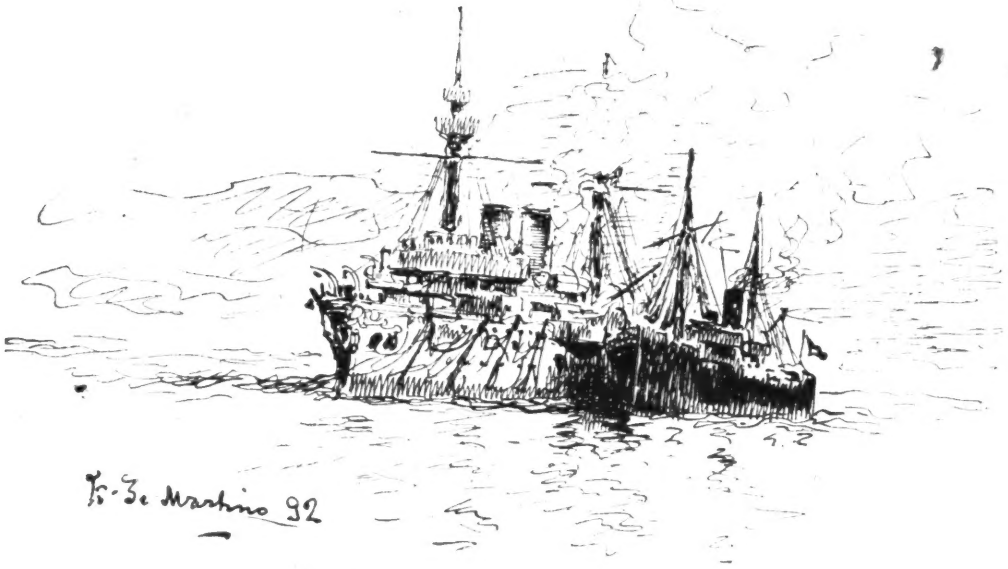
"Certainly, sir."

"Then be so good as to do so, and let me know when the business is finished."

And thus it happened that late that afternoon, when the *Mary Rose* steamed proudly away to the northward, the little dried skipper stood stamping and cursing on his quarter-deck, with the knowledge that the engines beneath him had been deprived of half-a-dozen small pieces of metal, without which they were useless. The little pieces of metal were not far off. Mr. Macpherson himself had dropped them overboard, and the depth was only seven fathoms. The local natives, moreover, were capital divers, and the bottom was pretty clean, so that the valuable fragments were not likely to be lost. But they would require a good deal of looking for. And no wonder that the little dried Frenchman stamped and swore until the *Mary Rose*, steaming with his coal, was below the horizon.

Mr. Macpherson also swore. "This is," he said, "the very dirtiest and vilest coal that I have met with in the whole course of my experience." And Mr. Maintruck, as he saw his white decks growing blacker and blacker, and watched the plumes of funereal smoke above the cruiser's funnels, swore too, but solaced himself by remarking to Salthorse, "Well, they may take us for anything but an Englishman. This is a deuced sight more deceptive than flying a dozen French ensigns. I never saw anything like it, unless it was the smoke from the German squadron at Spithead in '89. Whew! I got a whiff of that, and I shall never forget it."

It is but about eighty miles from the mouth of the Wadi Gloug to the mouth of the Strait of Gibraltar. Maintaining a speed of ten knots, but having ordered steam for full speed to



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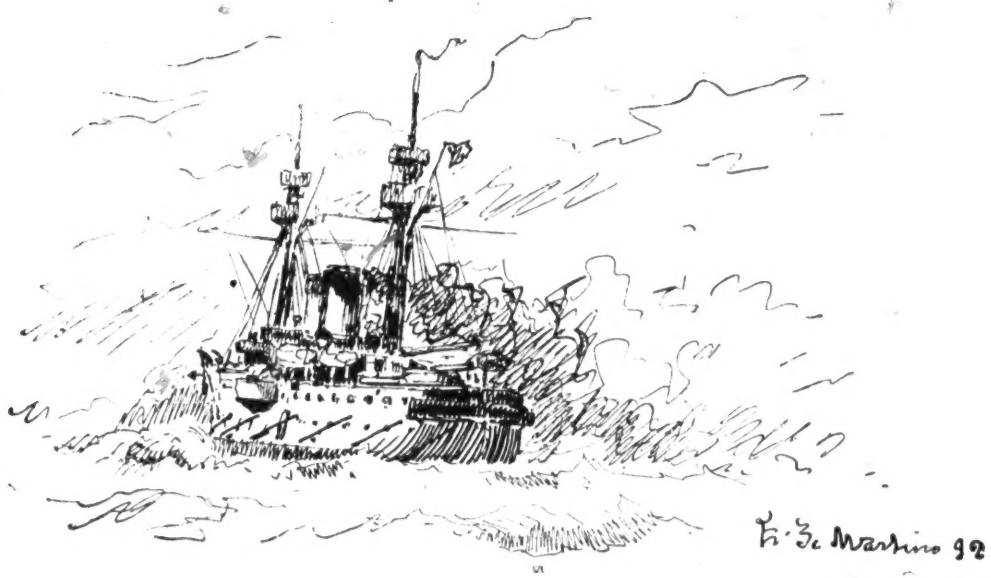
COALING OFF THE WADE GLOUG.



VI

"STEAMING WITH HIS COAL."

be ready by ten o'clock, Bowling followed the coast as far to the northward as Arzilla, and then, altering course four points to port, kept away to seaward. At eight o'clock, and again at half-past nine, he increased speed until he was running at sixteen knots, and until at midnight Cape Spartel bore S.S.E., eighteen miles. He was therefore about fifty miles due west of the narrowest part of the Strait.

The men, excepting the watch, had turned in at the usual hour, but at midnight Bowling turned up all hands, and briefly addressed them. He said that, so far as he knew, the French Fleet was still bombarding Gibraltar; but that, whether or no, he was going to rush the Strait. If the French were there he intended to do them as much harm as possible in his passage. He was going through at full speed. He did not purpose to use the ram, as he had no desire to damage himself, and as he knew how difficult it was to use the ram with effect. Whatever work might be done must therefore be done with the gun and torpedo. If he got through, he would, no doubt, be chased—perhaps all the way to Malta, whither he was bound. The men, consequently, must be prepared for a long spell of hard work. He had absolute confidence, however, in their willingness to stand by him and his officers. They had already made two very valuable prizes, the due proportion of the proceeds of which, upon their return home, would be at their disposal, and in the Mediterranean there would doubtless be other prizes not less worth having, but that night he was not looking for prizes, but for glory. The men, who received the

address with enthusiasm, were then dismissed to their quarters, and Bowling, mounting to the bridge, ordered speed to be further increased to seventeen knots, and headed his ship to the eastward.

It was a cloudy and rather dark night. There was but little wind, but there was a heavy swell from the Atlantic, and the *Mary Rose*, as she bounded away before it, took the water over her bows in great showers of spray, and pitched pretty deeply, although, as she had plenty of freeboard, she seldom or never absolutely buried her nose.

"It's not much of a night for torpedo boats," said Bowling to Tripper. "I doubt whether we shall be troubled with them. They will all have run for shelter."

"Well, even if they are out," answered the torpedo lieutenant, "they will steam very badly in this swell, and we shall have the legs of the best of them."

"I think that we won't use our above-water torpedo tubes," continued Bowling. "I don't quite like the risk of having such quantities of explosives where a chance shell from the enemy may get at them and blow us up. In case of our having an opportunity, I will manœuvre so as to enable you to use the bow and stern under-water tubes, and these must suffice for to-night. But please, Mr. Tripper, be ready with a second and third torpedo for each. I'm going to do all the damage I can; and it won't be my fault if our friends in the Strait don't remember this 13th of May."

"Sail right ahead!" hailed the look out in the foretop.

"Kindly go up and have a look at it, Mr. Salthorse," said Bowling.

Salthorse, who, in spite of his seniority in the Navy, was not lacking in activity when serious business was doing, went up with an agility worthy of a midshipman, and reported that the stranger looked like a cruiser, but was still too far off to be exactly made out.

"Now for the rush, then," cried Bowling, as he bent over the engine-room speaking tube. "Put on the forced draught," he shouted down, "and give me all the speed you possibly can." To a messenger he said, "Take my compliments to the chief engineer, and beg him to make the best arrangements for getting plenty of coal and for keeping plenty of steam. We shall probably want forced draught all night." And to the gunnery lieutenant, "Please, Mr. Tompion, have every gun that will bear trained on this ship as we come up with her, and be ready to fire at my direction, but not before. Make your men lie down when you safely can, and see that there is plenty of ammunition on deck."

Then he glued his eyes to his night-glass, and with legs apart and greatcoat flapping in the wind made by the ship, gazed over the spray-washed bows into the pregnant darkness.

When a vessel is moving by night at a speed of about twenty statute miles an hour she very quickly closes any stationary or nearly stationary objects that may be sighted lying near her course. Soon, therefore, Bowling saw a huge masted mass

looming up ahead of him: and his familiarity with the outward appearance of most of the ships of the French *Escadre de la Méditerranée* at once told him that this dark monster was the great protected cruiser *Tage*, the largest unarmoured cruiser in the French Navy. She was a vessel of 7045 tons displacement and 12,410 indicated horse-power, built at St. Nazaire in 1884, and carrying, in addition to numerous lighter weapons, six 6·4-in. and ten 5·4-in. guns. She was moving very slowly diagonally across the *Mary Rose's* course, with her nose to the south-west, and she did not appear to see the privateer until the latter was within a mile of her. Having seen her, she increased speed a little, and came towards the intruder, whereupon Bowling, who by that time felt quite sure that it was the *Tage* and no other craft that was approaching him, starboarded his helm a bit, and as his ship came round, ordered the starboard 9·4-in. gun to be fired at the Frenchman, who, when the word was given, was barely three cables away.

The *Tage* was clearly taken by surprise, and before she returned the compliment the *Mary Rose's* people had fired their big starboard gun a second time, and had poured in a perfect hail of projectiles from their 4·7-in. and smaller guns. The enemy, who had sent up three rockets, then replied with a broadside, which, being badly aimed, did no damage, and with a dropping fire, which had scarcely begun to be effective ere it ceased.

The ships had been moving on two ever-nearing arcs, and

were nearly broadside to broadside, when the *Tage* ceased firing. At the same instant she appeared to lose her way.

"Look out, sir," cried Echo suddenly to Bowling, "she has fired a torpedo. I saw it enter the water. There!" and he pointed to a luminous streak which was lengthening out from the *Tage's* side and rapidly approaching the *Mary Rose*.

Bowling put the helm hard over to starboard, and reversed one engine, so that he quickly showed his stern to the enemy, and so handy was the ship, that, to his delight, almost as much as to his relief, he was able to let the torpedo pass harmlessly along her whole length, and slowly vanish into the gloom beyond.

The few seconds during which the danger was imminent were trying ones for all who were aware of it; but the men at the guns were in blissful ignorance, and they continued to pound the *Tage* and to make excellent practice at her. Bowling completed the small circle which the discharge of the torpedo had forced him to begin, and while he was completing it the enemy resumed her fire, although she now fired feebly and in a desultory manner. Several of the *Mary Rose's* men had fallen and had been carried below, and the captain, anxious to make an end as soon as possible of the unsatisfactory combat, put himself in the Frenchman's wake, and almost immediately discovered that in that position he was very little exposed to the enemy's fire, and was, indeed, comparatively safe.

But, since first sighting the *Mary Rose*, the *Tage* had greatly improved her pace, and, although cinders and flame, as

well as smoke, were pouring from the privateer's funnels, and the ship was throbbing like some wild thing burdened with a heart too big for it, the British vessel was little, if at all, superior to her opponent in speed. The *Tage* was heading direct for the narrow part of the Strait, and there Bowling realised that he must expect to find nothing but enemies, while the other would probably find nothing but friends.

Mr. Binnacle, with his sextant to his eye, carefully watched the chase. "I think we are coming up a little, sir," he would say at one moment, and at another: "I believe she is gaining a trifle again, sir."

"What is her distance, do you think?" asked Bowling.

"Well, sir, I haven't the height of her spars, but I should imagine not more than four cables."

"Too far for a torpedo, I'm afraid," remarked Bowling, regretfully: "surely we ought to be able to stop her with our guns. Where is Mr. Tompion?"

In less than a minute Tompion saluted the captain.

"We're not making very good practice, Mr. Tompion, I'm afraid," said the latter. "I know it's very difficult shooting with so much water coming over our bows, and with the ship pitching so freely, but we must stop the enemy if we can."

"We can only hope for a lucky shot, then, sir," returned Tompion. "I have fired two or three rounds myself, and I know the difficulty. Perhaps if you were to yaw a little, so that I could bring one of the sponson guns to bear, I might be more successful. I don't like to fire them right ahead for fear

of damaging the ship, but if you would yaw two points I could manage it, though, of course, we should lose ground. However, there is much less motion with the sponson guns, and the shooting would certainly be better."

"No! I won't yaw yet," decided Bowling. "I should lose too much. For the present, please, go on firing as before with the bow gun, but see that they don't waste the ammunition."

Below, on the privateer's forecastle, the scene was an exciting one. Not only the 9·4-in. gun was engaged; the four 4·7-in. guns immediately abaft it were firing too. But every few seconds, as the staggering ship pitched into the water, sea and spray flew tempestuously over her bows, and threatened to wash the men from their quarters. The guns had no chance of getting hot. They were kept far too wet for that, but that was the only advantage of the situation. The dark object which represented the *Tage* was now hoisted high on the swell, and now nearly hidden by it; and even had there been no spray, it would have been exceedingly hard to hit so unstable a mark.

Meanwhile, the flying enemy was sending up signal rockets at frequent intervals, and, at the same time, firing desultorily. Tompion was sent for again to the bridge. Macpherson and Tripper were also summoned thither. But Tompion could make no better practice than before; Macpherson could not provide an ounce more steam than he was already providing; and Tripper held out no hope that a torpedo, discharged at so great a range and at a fast retreating target, would reach its

mark. "The torpedo will make its twenty-seven knots, sir," explained the last named officer, "but the enemy is doing her nineteen, and is already four cables ahead of us. We should only waste the torpedo, for it would have to run over a mile and a half at full speed to catch up the chase, and I never yet knew a torpedo run more than fourteen or sixteen hundred yards before stopping altogether."

It was therefore tolerably certain that, barring accidents, the *Tage*, if her friends were still off the Rock, must escape. Bowling, whose temper was usually very equable, could not conceal his annoyance, but his attention was suddenly distracted by an unexpected hail from the look-out in the top. "Two sail in chase on the starboard quarter," sang out the man, who had lungs of brass. And there, truly enough, coming out from under the shadow of Cape Spartel, were a couple of black hulls, from whose funnels were trailing sheets of flame, and sparks, and shrouds of smoke of the very blackest. They were a good two miles off, when first sighted, but a brief break in the thick clouds let the moonlight down to them, and Bowling speedily recognised them as two cruisers of the *Surcouf* class. There was no room for doubt. Everyone who saw the *Surcouf* herself at Spithead, in the summer of 1891, and who recollects her, must agree that a craft of her type is not easily to be taken for anything else that floats and steams. They were, as afterwards appeared, the *Cosmao* and the *Coëtlogon*, third-class cruisers of about 1850 tons displacement and 6000 horse-power, each mounting four 5·4-in. breech-

loading, three quick-firing, and four machine guns, carrying five torpedo tubes, and having a speed nominally about half a knot superior to that of the *Mary Rose*.

Bowling looked at the chase, half expecting to see her turn, and mentally calculating whether, if she did so, it would be worth while to endeavour to ram her; but he quickly decided that it would not. He recollected that never, up to that time, in the history of modern naval warfare, had the ram been effectively used while the enemy still had sea-room and control of her machinery and steering gear. If he could first disable his opponent, the ram might, he concluded, be his proper weapon, but not unless.

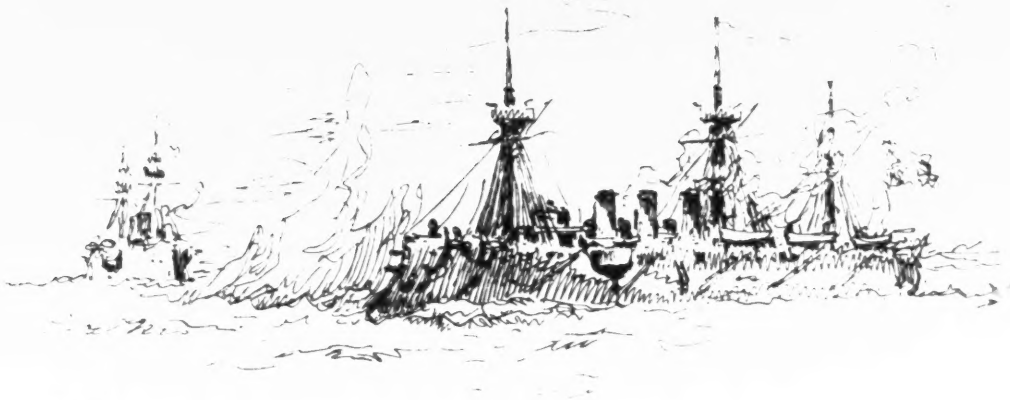
The two vessels astern had already opened fire, but they did no harm, the distance being too great and the swell too heavy. The projectiles, however, came near enough to the bridge to make themselves loudly heard; and, as the *Tage* also was now firing freely from several revolving cannon which she had got up on to her poop, as well as from the few larger guns that would bear, Bowling determined not to expose himself and his officers more than was absolutely necessary, and to fight the ship, for the present, from the quarter-deck, instead of from the neighbourhood of the conning tower. He still kept the tops manned, of course, with a midshipman in each of them; and, as a matter of fact, the men, even had he ordered them to come down, would have been very unwilling to do so, for, in such circumstances, the tops are the most exciting positions in a ship.

But although Bowling nominally fought his ship from the quarter-deck, he did not continuously remain there. Followed by a bugler and a couple of messengers, he went everywhere, now watching the firing of the guns on the forecastle, now mounting upon the hammock nettings to get a wider view, and now revisiting the bridge, in order to consult the chart with Binnacle. For half-an-hour the relative positions of the ships did not apparently vary by a couple of cables' lengths.

Then, in the west, were seen innumerable lights, as of a floating city, and, above them, in the black night, shone patches of red, green, and violet stars, as the great French Fleet—stretching half across the Strait—came westward, alarmed by the repeated signals of its scouts, and signalled in return promises of succour.

Bowling saw this sight first from the bridge. Soon he could see it from the forecastle, as the ship rose on the swell. His heart beat, one may suspect, a little faster than usual; but his voice was only a trifle rougher and harder than his ordinary voice, when, having summoned his officers, he said, briefly,—

"Gentlemen, there is the French Fleet. I want you to help me to take the *Mary Rose* through it. If I fall, the officer who commands must carry her to Malta, and hand over to the Admiral there a dispatch which is now in my pocket. I have weighted it, so that it may be sunk if necessary. But God forbid! If necessary also, the private signals must be sunk. Mr. Tripper, I shall use the underwater bow and stern tubes: I confide in you to have everything ready. Mr. Macpherson,



H. De Mowbray
92

"ORDERED THE STANDARD 9.4 IN. GUN TO BE FIRED."

you have done nobly, so far, in your department. Give us, please, all the help you can. Mr. Tompion, man both sides, and tell the officers of quarters not to lose a shot, and not to fire at a greater range than a thousand yards. Gentlemen, to your quarters, and may our work be well done."

Owing to the fact that she carried nearly all her guns on the upper deck, the *Mary Rose* had been fitted with a considerable number of shot-hoists, which worked through scuttles in that deck. These were, of course, open in time of action, and Bowling had already made up his mind that, rather than trust to mechanical or electrical signalling apparatus, he would pass all orders to the main deck by word of mouth or bugles through the scuttles. Instructions were given for the orders to be handed on in the same way to their destinations, and thus, independent of wires, tubes, bars, and levers, the captain was able to communicate pretty promptly with every department, no matter where he might be. Not the least advantageous feature in this arrangement was that an officer standing near a scuttle could obtain a certain amount of protection from the shield of the gun, for the service of which the scuttle was designed, and could thus derive from the shelter some of the benefits of a conning tower, while, at the same time, the real conning tower, the natural target for all hostile projectiles, was unoccupied.

It was, at first, impossible to distinguish the order in which the French Fleet was steaming, for across the privateer's bows stretched a confused row of lights that bobbed upon the swell,

and that seemed to have little or no order at all; but soon Bowling made out that the cruisers, in line abreast, were about a couple of miles ahead of the battleships, which were in similar formation. The entire Fleet was coming out in a body. It, therefore, evidently believed that it was being attacked in force, and that a general action might be expected. The *Tage* held on, heading straight for the centre of her friends, and pouring forth more flame, sparks, and smoke than ever. The *Mary Rose*, three or four cables astern of her, held on also, the quartermasters at the wheel having general directions to follow the *Tage* into the enemy's line. All firing at the cruiser had ceased, although the *Tage* continued to fire as before; and the *Mary Rose's* men worked silently at their guns, training them on the high hulls that were so rapidly approaching, and eagerly awaiting the word to begin.

The speed of the advancing French was not more than eleven knots, but that of the privateer was nineteen. The two were thus closing one another at a speed of about thirty knots, or, as nearly as possible, one thousand yards a minute. At first, it was quite clear, the French did not know what to make of the situation, but it may be assumed that the *Tage* made some kind of signal to them, for, when their first line was a mile or so from the privateer, their cruisers began to converge towards the *Mary Rose*, and, as was evident from their augmented smoke, to endeavour to greatly increase their speed.

Bowling stood immediately above the main deck wheel, from

which his ship was being steered. He had unsheathed his sword, and he leant upon it as he stooped from time to time over the scuttle to shout down his orders. His face was bloodless, but his lips were set. Behind him stood the bugler, who looked as if, at that moment, he could not have blown a call to save his life. The enemy, on both bows, began to fire. Once or twice the projectiles from their machine guns swept across the deck like hail, until the range was again lost. Then the bigger guns opened, at about a thousand yards, and splinters began to fly from the woodwork above, and from the boats.

Bowling looked up and saw that, owing to the converging movement, the first French line had drawn in to nearly half its former breadth, and that the ships on his port bow had converged somewhat more than those on his starboard, having made a more sudden turn. In an instant, therefore, he ordered his own helm to be put somewhat over to starboard, thus bringing his course nearly parallel with that of the right flank of the French. At the same time he gave the word to open fire, and every gun in the ship at once answered him.

The *Mary Rose's* last movement had had the effect of placing all the French cruisers, except one, upon her starboard bow and beam. To get near her, the vessels which had been carrying starboard helm would, Bowling knew, have either to risk making an awkward turn, which would expose them to his ram, or to continue going round to port. The one evolution would get them into difficulties with their ships of the left

flank, the other would cause them to lose a great amount of valuable time. As a matter of fact, none of these ships ventured to port the helm, but the outside ship, seeing herself, as it were, cut off for the moment from her friends, was obviously determined to endeavour to ram.

She was easily recognised as the *Davout*, a fine steel twin-screw protected cruiser of over 3000 tons displacement, and 9000 indicated horse-power, that had been launched at Toulon in 1889; and, as she headed straight for the privateer's port bow, and came on rapidly, she towered a magnificent object. Bowling shifted his helm a point or so, so as to offer his bow, and shouted in rapid succession: "Ready, bow tube!" . . . "Fire, bow tube!" . . . Then, when the two ships were almost in collision, he swung the *Mary Rose's* head still more to port.

The torpedo hit its mark, striking the *Davout* on the port bow immediately under the anchor davit; and, even while the huge column of white water from the explosion was still in the air, the *Mary Rose* swept close along the *Davout's* starboard side, and, with guns depressed to their utmost limit, fired down through her armoured deck. The *Davout's* people must have been lying down in preparation for the shock of ramming, for only one of her guns replied to that tremendous salvo; but that one sent its 6·4-in. shell clean through the privateer's thin citadel armour. It burst, with terrible result, on the main deck, close to the wheel above which Bowling stood, and killed or wounded every man in the vicinity; but Bowling, although

temporarily blinded and half suffocated by the smoke and dust which poured up through the scuttle at his feet, was unhurt, and, almost ere the ship had had time to fall off, the wheel was taken by others.

The *Mary Rose* had passed the line of cruisers. She had still to pass the line of battleships a couple of miles ahead, and she now had half-a-dozen cruisers close at her heels.

"I can't see astern as well as ahead," cried Bowling to Maintruck. "Station someone here to pass the word down promptly. I must go into the conning tower, or on to the bridge, and chance it." And up he went.

There was but a brief respite. The privateer headed due east, and plunged gallantly through the seas towards the second line, and, in three minutes, she was in the thick of a fire ten times heavier than anything which she had previously experienced. Strange to say, the machinery in the conning tower worked. The unseen brain in that little steel bandbox directed, for a few moments, everything and everybody in the ship. The manœuvre which had succeeded so well with the *Davout* was tried again, more or less successfully, with an ironclad. The after torpedo tube was also discharged. The wheel on the main deck spun this way and that. The ship darted hither and thither in the smoke. She trembled with the bursting of shells. She echoed with the short shrieks of injured men, she shook with the firing of her own guns, she heeled as the helm was put hard over in order to avoid a blow. But all happened so quickly, that to tell it would occupy an

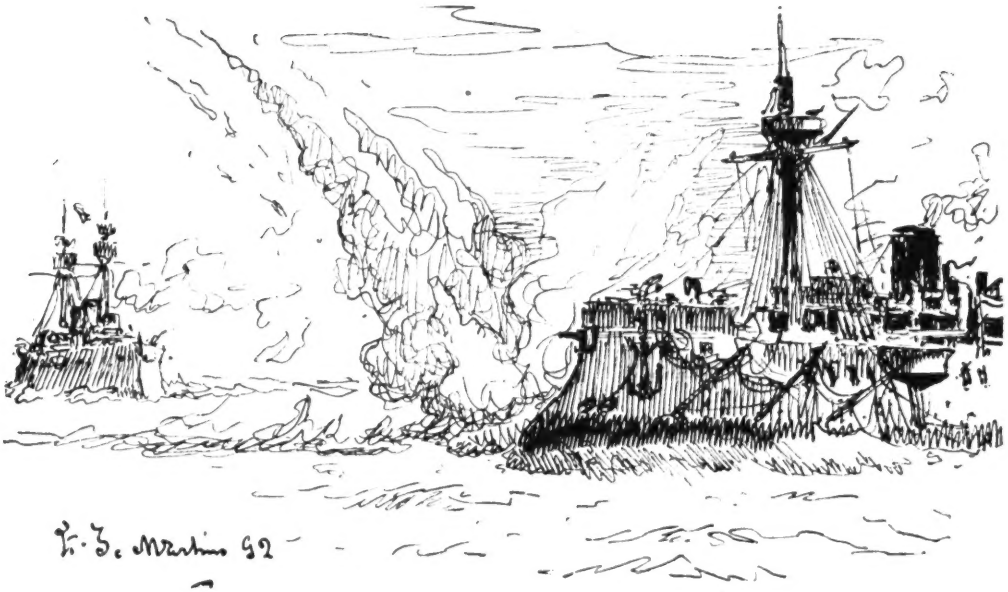
hour for each minute of that sharp hot piece of work. Somehow, to be brief, the *Mary Rose* got through the line, thanks to the guiding eye of Bowling; but barely was she clear ere a shell burst against the conning tower and wrecked it. In a moment the guiding intelligence ceased to influence her. Everyone was conscious of the change, and would have been, even had the cause of it not been so plainly evident.

"Poor old Bowling!" cried Tompion to the first lieutenant. "Take command, Maintruck. The skipper's done for. God rest him!"

And so, therefore, it was to Maintruck that fell the duty, now that the *Mary Rose* had traversed her enemies, of saving her from their pursuit. Yet, happily, Bowling was not done for. The shell had shattered everything in the conning tower, and the flying objects had injured him seriously. Moreover, he was stunned by the shock, and, when found, was bleeding from eyes, nose, mouth, and ears, and was quite unconscious; but, though the sight of one eye was destroyed, and he had received a dozen other wounds, he had sustained no mortal hurt.

Would that as much could be said for the members of the brave ship's company! Lieutenant Day had his left arm broken by an iron splinter; Lieutenant Salthorse had an ugly wound in the chest from a machine gun bullet; Mr. Roberts, midshipman, and Mr. Plane, carpenter, were killed by the bursting of the same shell, and of the crew, fifty-seven were killed, and thirty-nine badly wounded. Of small wounds

"IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO DISTINGUISH THE ORDER IN WHICH THE FRENCH FLEET WAS STEAMING."



"MARY ROSE" TORPEDOING AN IRONCLAD

nearly everyone had several, for enormous numbers of splinters had been flying about. Indeed, scarcely a single person, except those whose duties had kept them below, had escaped unscathed, and Dr. Rhubarb had his hands full. Burnt with powder, stained with blood, splashed with horrible relics of unrecognisable humanity, the main and upper decks of the *Mary Rose* presented a sickening sight. The two quick-firing guns on the starboard quarter were literally covered with the mangled remains of the guns' crews, who had been blown to pieces at their duty. The starboard sponson gun had become unshipped from its mounting, and had to be lashed for safety, and almost every place between decks was simply a hole full of wreckage.

But the engines and machinery, and, indeed, the ship as a whole, were as sound as ever. Very little water came in over the armoured deck, and none below it, and Maintruck, as he looked back at the French cruisers, now in full pursuit, and saw the glint of the rising sun upon their white bow waves, felt easier concerning them than he had felt at midnight.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHASE TO MALTA.

BEFORE proceeding with the account of the *Mary Rose's* cruise, it may be well to insert here two newspaper extracts. One is from the *Gibraltar Guardian* of Wednesday, May 14th; the other is from the Paris *Moniteur de la Guerre* of two or three days later.

Said the Gibraltar paper: "Something mysterious occurred last night to disturb the enemy. At dusk he renewed the bombardment as usual, and with, if possible, more than his usual fury, and the batteries replied as they have replied every night since the 3rd inst. Soon after midnight it was reported from the top of the rock that rockets had been observed at the mouth of the Strait to the westward. A little later the entire French Fleet ceased firing, formed in two columns of line abreast, and steamed away in the direction in which the signals had been seen. Heavy firing followed, but though the flashes were distinctly visible, it was impossible to make out what was going on. The warships, which for some days have been lying in the Bay with banked fires, were ordered to get

up steam for full speed, it being believed that our Fleet had come down in force to raise the siege, and that the co-operation of the naval flotilla here might be desirable. In about an hour the French came back pell-mell, and apparently in no sort of order, firing furiously. They went away to the eastward, as if in flight or pursuit, but that they were not in flight became evident early this morning, when most of them were discovered in their ordinary position under the African shore. Speculation is rife as to exactly what occurred, but it is certain that the enemy was surprised and seriously disturbed. One opinion is that heavy reinforcements have run through in order to strengthen the squadron at Malta. No news bearing on the subject has come in from the Spanish side, and, all the cables being cut, it is only from that side that we can hope to get any definite explanation."

The *Moniteur de la Guerre* was more precise, but less accurate. It headed its dispatch, "One more Victory in the Mediterranean," and described the affair as follows: "Early on the morning of the 14th, the cruiser *Tage*, which had been dispatched to the westward by the Admiral in command off Gibraltar to observe the mouth of the Strait, signalled the approach of the enemy in force, coming from the direction of the Atlantic. The enemy was soon afterwards observed by the cruisers *Cosmao* and *Coetlogon*, which had been lying under Cape Spartel. The three vessels, undismayed by the superior strength of the enemy, advanced to the attack, and taking position on the flanks of the English squadron, discharged a

succession of terrible broadsides, which must have been very murderous, but the effect of which could not in the darkness be accurately measured. Certain vessels were, it is declared, sunk by our fire; but the enemy was too powerful to be destroyed by only three ships. It was therefore with a sense of relief that the brave captain of the *Tage* remarked that his signals had been observed, and that, in reply, the whole of our magnificent Fleet, abandoning for the moment the bombardment of Gibraltar—which, we are assured, is already a heap of *débris*—was coming to complete the destruction which he had so nobly begun. It approached in two lines. In vain did the unfortunate English manœuvre to evade it. The shock was tremendous. It is recounted that our splendid ironclads rammed several of the enemy, which sank without leaving a trace. The struggle was desperate. One could not suspect that our brave Fleet could sustain so determined an attack without grievous loss. Alas! The beautiful cruiser *Davout*, struck by a torpedo near the bows, when she had already suffered severely from the gun fire of at least three ships, sank in less than an hour. The ironclad *Terrible* was also struck by a torpedo, but, though cruelly injured, is capable of being repaired. As for the brave *Tage*, she has received at least fifty balls, and has suffered horribly; but she remains with the Fleet. It is believed that but one vessel of the enemy escaped the disaster. She is an ironclad of the largest size, and of immense speed; but, pursued by some of our fastest ships, she should be by this time captured. Thus

gallantly has our immortal Fleet confounded the efforts of the enemy to put once more his squadrons into the Mediterranean. That sea, cleared forever from the presence of the usurper by the glorious battle of Toulon, remains, and will remain, French. We offer the homage of our warm and enthusiastic congratulations to the brave Admiral and the brave officers who have added this triumphant page to the brilliant history of our great country."

The *Moniteur de la Guerre* was not, it should be explained, an official print; but as the Parisians preferred its accounts to the official dispatches—which were by many degrees more modest—the paper deserves to be quoted as a representative of French views. Even the French Admirals were not able to give the true story of the night's work; but that was not their fault. Of nothing is it more difficult to obtain a correct impression than an unexpected night action at sea.

It was true that some of the fastest ships of the French Fleet were engaged in the pursuit of the *Mary Rose*. When the sun was well up, Maintruck had little difficulty in making out that astern of him, at distances varying from two to six miles, were the *Cécille*, *Alger*, *Troude*, and *Cosmao*. The first, a new protected cruiser, of 5766 tons displacement, headed the enemy; then came the *Alger*, of 4122 tons, and, in order, the remaining pair, craft of 1877 tons. The two smaller vessels were nominally the fastest of the flotilla, having done at their trials about 19·5 knots, or half-a-knot more than the other two; but they were not big enough to do that speed in

broken water, and, indeed, both chased and chasers were not actually doing much more than 17·5 knots, for all experienced some little difficulty in getting the coal out of the bunkers. Maintruck was assured, however, by Mr. Macpherson, that, if things came to a pinch, the privateer had nearly a knot of speed in hand, but the trimmers and stokers, who had been working like niggers all night, were naturally very much exhausted, and the chief engineer deemed it wise to spare them as much as possible.

There was much to be done that morning. The ship was in an awful condition, blood, splinters, and wreckage being everywhere; but a liberal use of the hose, and the exertions of the carpenter's mate, Mr. Prism Brown, and Mr. Tiller, soon reduced things to something like order, and cleared away the most repulsive traces of the fight. The dead men were reverently committed to the deep, Maintruck reading over them the appointed simple service; and the wounded were attended to more fully than had been possible during the heat of the action. The enthusiasm of all hands was now extraordinary. Even men who had been badly hurt, and who, of course, had not closed their eyes for more than twenty-four hours, men who had worked hard at coaling ship off Wadi Gloug, and who had worked harder at the guns all night, declined to return themselves as injured, stuck to their posts, and expressed themselves as quite ready for another brush with the enemy. And Bowling himself set the example. He could not walk, but he caused a splintered arm-chair to be

taken from his cabin and set on the quarter-deck, and then had himself carried up and placed in it in the warm sunshine, whence, as the good ship pitched slightly, he could see the foe in hot chase, with the spray flying white from their bows and the smoke rolling black from their funnels.

"Glad to see you on deck, sir," said Maintruck, "though I suspect that you would be better in your bunk."

"Nonsense," said Bowling, "this air does one good. Besides, it doesn't do to knock under. It shows a bad example to the men. It will be time enough to turn in when I get to Malta. But I'll have you, Mr. Binnacle, and Mr. Tompion turn in at once. It won't do for you to break down. Mr. Echo and one of the midshipmen shall keep watch, and you shall be called if necessary. How are Mr. Day and Mr. Salthorse?"

"They are both on deck, sir, and won't go below."

"Then send for them, if you please, Mr. Maintruck."

The two officers quickly appeared, Day with his left arm in a sling and a bloody bandage, and Salthorse with his coat cut open, and his blood-stained shirt showing through the aperture. Both were pale but cheerful.

"Why don't you go below, Mr. Day?" asked the captain. "I'm sorry to see that you are badly hurt."

Day took his glasses from his nose, and said: "Oh, it's not much, sir. If I stay on deck I can carry on well enough, but if I turn in, you know, I may get stiff, and not be able to be up when they come on again."

"And what have you to say, Mr. Salthorse?" demanded Bowling.

"Say, sir?" returned Salthorse. "Well, you know how long I've been at sea, and you know that, until this cruise, the only fighting I have ever seen has been with niggers, Egyptians, Arabs, and that sort of ullage. Never had a chance, sir. Now there is a chance, sir, and with your permission I don't intend to lose it. I'll go below, but if I go, sir, you must put me under arrest." He said this almost angrily, as if he suspected Bowling of aiming in an unjustifiable manner at the liberty of the subject.

"I shan't order you below, then, at present," replied Bowling, with a painful smile. "But do take care of yourselves, please, gentlemen. There may be plenty for us to do yet. Get chairs on deck or on the bridge, and then, if you really think that we can keep watch among us, I'll order all the unwounded officers, and as many of the men as can be spared, to turn in. That is, perhaps, the best economy. We are not good for much more fighting just now, but we can keep some sort of look-out."

And thus it happened that soon after breakfast, few beside the wounded remained on deck. Those who had only been bruised or scratched, or who had escaped unhurt, were all asleep or, at least, lying down. None took off their clothes, and hardly any enjoyed much more than broken snatches of slumber; but a sailor does not need sleep in large quantities at a time, and for him a rug on the bare deck or a

ward-room sofa makes as pleasant a resting-place as any other in war time.

The *Cécille* occasionally fired her bow guns and the machine guns in her tops; but the range was long, the motion was still considerable, and Salthorse, who had placed a chair for himself behind the wreck of the conning tower, was able to keep a good look-out without much exposing himself. Nevertheless before dinner-time one man had been killed, and a second had received a further wound. The enemy's vessels gained little if anything on the *Mary Rose;* but by noon they were more together, and the *Alger* was nearly abreast of the *Cécille,* and had also begun to fire. Bowling had the chart brought down to him, and having caused an observation to be taken, and having looked at the log, made out that at eight bells the ship was still 960 miles from Malta, and that if all went at the best, she could not get into Valetta Harbour before five or six o'clock on Saturday, May 16th. She had still therefore, or might have, to run for about fifty-four hours before the enemy. He shook his head doubtfully, and having got a bluejacket to bring him his pipe, considered the matter silently, until, at half-past three, Maintruck—who had had a bath and some tea—came on deck again, declaring that he felt quite refreshed and fit for anything.

"Look here, Mr. Maintruck," said Bowling, "we have before us a fifty hours' run to Malta. After what we have been doing, our boilers can't be as good as they were. A hundred slight accidents may occur to temporarily disable us. Tubes may

burst or leak, the bearings may heat, a chance shot may damage our helm as the ship lifts; or we may smash a shaft. Even if we have no accidents, how can we expect the engine-room staff to carry on for another fifty hours on end? Flesh and blood can't stand it. I wonder that I haven't had reports already of men knocking up. They are sticking to it like Britons down there, but we musn't forget that they are human beings. Now, what do you think?"

"Perhaps, sir, if the night is dark," said the first lieutenant, "and if for a few hours we can pile on that extra knot which Mr. Macpherson tells us he has in reserve, we might manage to give the enemy the slip, especially if we steam without lights."

"That's the point," soliloquised Bowling aloud. "First, can we give them the slip? I think not. If we pile on that extra knot, we shall have such a flame dancing from the tops of our funnels that we shall be visible all over the Mediterranean. Secondly, do we want to give them the slip? Again I think not. There are four ships there, it is true, but not one of them is armoured, while we, after our last night's work especially, may almost be classed as a battleship. The question, then, is: Shall we run, or shall we turn; shall we flee, or shall we fight?"

"I see what you mean, sir," said Maintruck. "Of course we are now very short-handed, and the men, particularly the stokers, are tired."

"They will be more tired if we carry on like this for long.

No, Maintruck; I think that we will fight. That's what the people at home would like us to do. Here is what I intend to attempt. Just before it grows dusk I shall crack on that extra knot of Mr. Macpherson's. This will induce the enemy, who now seem to think that if they can't catch us they can at least hold on, to crack on steam also. The result will be that in a few hours we shall spread them out in a long tail as they were the first thing this morning. We will carry no lights. Suddenly we will shut off steam, and let the enemy come down right on top of us. They will think that some accident has happened to us. One or two of them will perhaps be venturesome; and then, starting our engines again, we will let them have it. The swell is very much less than it was. We shall make far better shooting than we did last night. What do you think?"

Mr. Maintruck was not the officer to shrink from any action that promised the remotest chance of success; and this project, though a daring one, seemed, upon the whole, to be less risky than the alternative of keeping everybody and everything at the highest possible tension for another fifty hours. "If that is your plan, sir," he answered, "all I have to say is that I am sure your officers and men will try to carry it through."

"Then, if you please, send all hands aft that I may explain things to everyone."

No one who was able to move and who was not detained by duty failed to appear in answer to the call. It was a

motley assemblage. Half the men wore bandages, the clothes of all were torn and dirty, all were powder-stained and unkempt; but all were ready for anything; and there was not one who preferred fleeing to fighting when Bowling, from his arm-chair, told them how matters lay. Their general demeanour removed from the captain's mind any traces of hesitation that may have lingered there. "My men," he said warmly, when he saw how they received his ideas, "I am proud to command you; and if you do your duty as I believe you will, you will be hereafter as proud as I shall to have sailed in the *Mary Rose*."

The events of the previous night had given everyone great confidence in the captain, and after Bowling's brief address the men clustered together as if debating something which caused them considerable uneasiness. Suddenly a tough old quartermaster stepped forward. "We means no offence, sir, to any of the officers," said he bluntly; "and we'll do our best no matter who commands us, but we begs respectful to arst whether you feels yourself well enough, sir, for this 'ere bit of work, seein' as if you don't, and if you think as 'ow you might feel more inclined like to-morrow night, why, sir, we ain't got no objections to waiting for you. Only we do 'ope, sir, as you'll command the ship, sir, if so be as it's convenient."

Bowling laughed, and managed to rise. It hurt him to laugh, and it cost him a most painful effort to stand up, but it did him good to have this awkward but honest token of the

confidence of the lower deck. "My men," he said, "I'm not much use, as you may see, but no bones are broken, and while I can stay on deck I shall be the captain of the *Mary Rose*. You needn't fear about that."

The chase continued without much incident all the afternoon, except that the *Cosmao*, having apparently broken down, abandoned the pursuit, and that shots were exchanged at intervals. The swell almost disappeared, and the shooting consequently became less wild. Indeed, some very fair practice was made with the *Mary Rose's* after guns, both the *Alger* and the *Cécille* being struck more than once. On the other hand, a shell from the *Alger* burst in the captain's cabin of the *Mary Rose*, and would, had Bowling been present, have infallibly made an end of him.

The gun on the starboard sponson was, as has been noticed, disabled. Bowling, determined, therefore, to fight his port side as much, and his starboard side as little as possible. Just before dusk, as he had intended, he increased speed to the utmost limit, and, as he had expected, this induced the *Cécille* to forge a little ahead of her consorts. The truth, no doubt, was that all day she had been adapting her speed to theirs, so as to avoid leaving them or being herself unsupported, and that now, with darkness coming on and the *Mary Rose* drawing away, she was afraid of losing sight of the privateer in the night. Mr. Binnacle, who gave the subject his very careful attention, was of opinion that when the *Mary Rose* quickened to 18·5 knots the *Cécille* did the same, and

that thus she left her consorts each hour about a knot further behind her in her wake, for they appeared to be incapable of materially increasing speed.

Speed was raised at seven o'clock, and was admirably maintained by Mr. Macpherson and his people. The result was that at eleven o'clock, when about two miles still intervened between the *Mary Rose* and the *Cécille*, there was a gap of at least six miles between the *Cécille* and the *Alger*, and a further gap of over one mile between the *Alger* and the *Troude*.

Bowling, with a rug thrown over him, had since about eight o'clock been dozing in his arm-chair on deck, after leaving word that he was to be roused at one bell. He was not, however, able to secure as much sorely needed rest as he had bargained for. At about ten minutes past eleven the enemy played a wholly unexpected card, which, but for the *Mary Rose's* admirable look-out, and the coolness and discipline of the men at the guns, would have inevitably and very summarily decided the game.

The chasing squadron must either have been accompanied by, or have fallen in with and picked up a division of torpedo boats. It is possible that the boats followed the chase all the way from Gibraltar, and that the "tailing off" of the French cruisers may, after all, have been deliberately devised in order to enable the torpedo boats to remain well out of sight in the rear without losing touch of the privateer. On the other hand, the boats may have been scouting independently, and have been accidentally sighted by the French senior officer

and then taken under his orders. The point is immaterial, and in all probability it will now never be cleared up. All that is certain and material is that, at a few minutes past eleven, the look-out in the *Mary Rose's* mizzen-top reported that three suspicious-looking objects were creeping up ahead of the *Cécille*, one being nearly under her bows, and the two others betraying a tendency to work round on the *Mary Rose's* quarters. Bowling was at once apprised of the discovery, and he caused himself and his chair to be carried up on to the after end of the superstructure at the foot of the mizzen, whence he could not only see the enemy, but could direct the fire of all the after guns, *i.e.* of the 9·2-in. breech-loading and the four 4·7-in. guns on the poop, of two 6-pounder quick-firing and two Nordenfelts on the upper deck, of the Maxim R.C. machine gun in the mizzen-top, and of two 6-pounder quick-firing guns mounted in his own cabin on the main deck. It was by no means very dark, and, bearing in mind the experience gained in the action off Toulon, Bowling, who speedily saw that a torpedo attack was pending, gave orders that, though the search-lights were to be kept in readiness, they were on no account to be used without special and definite instructions. He also ordered cordite ammunition to be got up for all the quick-firing and machine guns, and no other to be employed. On previous occasions he had used ordinary powder, except for rifle fire; but he realised that in the coming crisis smoke would seriously inconvenience him, and be of no possible counterbalancing advantage.

The boats, as has been said, were first noticed at 11° 10'. The *Mary Rose* was then doing about 18·3 knots, and the *Cécille*, though holding her own, was not coming up. After a few minutes of careful observation, Binnacle came to the conclusion that the boats were doing about 20·3, or two knots more than the privateer. There was apparently a distance of about four cables between the centre boat and each of the two flank ones. The centre one kept a course immediately ahead of that of the *Cécille*. The outer ones were disposed on each of her bows about four points before her beam, and it was tolerably obvious that the tactics of the foe contemplated holding the centre boat in reserve under the dark bows of the *Cécille*, and utilising her to attack during the confusion which, it was anticipated, would be caused by the simultaneous onslaught of the two other boats, one on each quarter of the *Mary Rose*.

These tactics, though ingenious, were demonstrably faulty, for it is a cardinal rule that no torpedo attack upon an armed vessel under steam should—especially when the attacking force is weak—be attempted from astern; and the reason for this is simple and obvious.

For the sake of argument, let the armed vessel be steaming at a rate of 10 knots, or 17 ft. a second; and let the attacking boats be steaming at a rate of 18 knots, or 30 ft. a second; and let the "dangerous zone" of fire from the armed vessel be taken to be 2000 yards, and the effective range of the boats' torpedoes discharged at night at a moving mark at 150

yards. The great object of the attacking boats is, of course, to traverse the "helpless zone"—the zone, that is, in which, although they may be fired at, they cannot effectively discharge their torpedoes—in as brief a period as possible. This zone is 1850 yards broad. If the boats enter it from directly ahead of the armed ship, they traverse it in 1′ 58″; but if they enter it from directly astern, it takes them 7′ 7″ to cross it. Therefore, other things being equal, a boat attacking from ahead has much more than three times as good a chance of escaping unhurt as a boat attacking from astern has. But in addition to this, in the particular case in question, if the boats had passed unseen ahead of the *Mary Rose*, and had attacked her from ahead, they would probably—even if they had not seriously damaged her—have forced her to turn, and would so have allowed their consorts the cruisers to come up with her. To pass from a position two miles astern of her to one, say, two miles ahead of her, without undergoing risk of being sighted by her, would, it is true, have taken the torpedo boats in this instance a period of three or four hours at least; but, then, the result might easily have been success, instead of failure and disaster.

The non-employment of the search-lights by the *Mary Rose* left the French ignorant as to whether or not the progress of the attack was observed. Bowling, on the other hand, was able to keep his men perfectly cool and unflurried. He ordered that fire from everything, the 9·2-in. guns only excepted, that would bear, should be opened upon the enemy

when he was at a distance of 400 yards, and not before. The port quarter guns were devoted to the boat on the port quarter; the starboard quarter guns to that on the starboard quarter. The Maxim gun was bidden to divide its attentions, and the riflemen were also divided; and, just upon the stroke of midnight, without having previously given forth the least warning of what was intended, the privateer opened. It was short, quick, terrible work. Harried by very little smoke, the men fired as fast as was consistent with the most careful aiming, and the boats, though most gallantly handled, really had no chance. A landsman might have experienced difficulty in seeing the low, dark, ill-defined masses upon the water; but to the trained eyes of men who had followed the sea, the scene was almost as clear as was to be desired; and, even when the boats themselves occasionally showed doubtfully, their white bow-waves sufficiently betrayed them and guided the gunners. All was over in five minutes. Torpedoes may have been discharged; but if so, they did not reach the privateer, or run anywhere near her; and as for the boats, they sank under the awful storm of projectiles that rained upon them. The third one, coming up astern under a great head of steam in the thick of the fight, blew up. Whether her boilers had exploded, or she had been struck by a projectile, can never be known. No one in the *Mary Rose* received so much as a scratch.

At half-past twelve, determined, if the enemy should still give him a chance of doing so, to carry out his original plan,

Bowling ordered Mr. Tompion to see that the poop and forecastle heavy guns, and all the guns that would train over on to the port side, were loaded and once more ready for action. Then he caused himself to be moved to a partially sheltered position near the wreck of the conning tower, whence he could shout down his commands through one of the deck scuttles already mentioned. "When we stop the engines, Mr. Tompion," he said, "or rather, when we go dead slow—for perhaps it is not wise to have no way on the ship—I shall bring her very gently round to port, so that if the enemy keeps on his course we shall lie right across his bows. If he doesn't keep on his course, I shall still endeavour to put myself in that position, and to maintain it as long as I safely can. It will at least entice him to attempt to use his ram, though, of course, I don't intend to let him go as far as that. Now, I want you to have every gun, great and small, concentrated on his bows as he comes up. Have them sighted for five hundred yards, and fire at that distance only. You give the word. I know you won't estimate the distance very wrongly. I will confine myself to handling the ship, but I must have the first lieutenant close at hand, so that he may take command in an instant, should anything happen to me. Please, therefore, ask Mr. Maintruck to come here, and ask Mr. Tripper to stand by with the underwater torpedoes in case we want them."

Mr. Maintruck, who had been making the round of the ship, reported everything ready. The men, including many of the

"SUSPICIOUS LOOKING OBJECTS WERE CREEPING UP."

"IT WAS SHORT, QUICK, TERRIBLE WORK."

wounded, were at their quarters; Day and Salthorse had taken command of their own guns, almost as if they had never been hurt; and there was everywhere an orderly quietness that seemed marvellous in a vessel that had been fitted out and commissioned in so great a hurry. But by this time confidence reigned throughout, and there is nothing so conducive to discipline as well-placed confidence in a ship and in her officers. Both had been tried; neither had been found wanting.

The *Cécille*, two miles astern, was just visible—a blacker spot than the rest of the darkness. She showed no lights ahead, though doubtless, for the benefit of her consorts, she showed some astern. They were, of course, out of sight.

"Reduce speed to sixty revolutions," cried Bowling, and added at intervals of a few seconds: "Reduce to forty!" "Reduce to twenty!"

In a minute or so the growing blackness and distinctness of the *Cécille* indicated that she was rapidly coming up. To assist her, Bowling reversed his engines gently for a short time, and then went ahead again at twenty revolutions and put his helm over. The Frenchman was approaching at the rate of a mile in four minutes. There was not, therefore, much delay. Yet to the men at the guns, and especially to the captains, who had their eyes along the luminous sights, the period seemed an eternity. Suddenly a rocket shot up from the *Cécille*, followed by another and another.

"That must be her signal that we have broken down, sir," said Maintruck. "She will slow up now, I suspect."

"Let her think what she likes," said Bowling, "so long as she doesn't think that we have surrendered," and he looked aloft, where three enormous blue ensigns were fluttering, one from each truck, and one from the forestay, these being in addition to the ensign on the ensign-staff. "I don't want her to be able to say that she thought that we had given up the game. Gad! she is coming straight down on us."

"But now she is swerving, sir. She is going to range up on our port hand."

"Hang it!" cried Bowling, staggering to his feet; "I can't sit here and fight the ship from an arm-chair. Yes, by Jove! she is going round to port, but she is slowing! Pass the word, there, to go ahead at forty revolutions. I can still bring the ship nearly across her bows."

But the *Cécille* turned only slightly. Her captain seemed, on second thoughts, to conclude that he could not take up a more advantageous position than circumstances had prepared for him; and, firing a single shot, which whistled harmlessly between the *Mary Rose's* funnels, he held on as before, keeping his head straight for the privateer, but slowing considerably. When he was but eight hundred yards distant he fired again. This time the projectile struck the deck forward, scooped out a great hole, drove up a torrent of splinters, and ricochetted away to the eastward. The enemy was clearly beginning to think that he did not quite know what to make

of the situation. Once more he swerved to port, but as he did so, Bowling put the *Mary Rose's* helm over to starboard, and so kept his ship still more or less across the cruiser's bows. A minute later, Tompion, in a voice like the bellow of a bull, gave the word to fire ; and three 9·4-in. and four 4·7-in., besides smaller guns, were discharged almost simultaneously, making the ship tremble from stem to stern.

What breeze there was was from the west. The rush of smoke, therefore (for ordinary powder was being used again), floated gently across the privateer's deck, and, for an instant, blinded everyone. But already Bowling had ordered full speed ahead, and had put his helm still further over to starboard, so that the *Mary Rose* began to round the cruiser's bows, and to pass alongside of her, though in the contrary direction.

"It is ticklish work, Maintruck," said the captain, "and I know it; but I must do it, because we can only fight the port guns."

"We shall clear her easily," cried the first lieutenant as the smoke drifted off. "By heavens! What's the matter, sir? They're hanging out lights."

The two vessels were still about five hundred yards distant one from the other, and no one in the *Mary Rose* could make out very clearly what was going forward in the *Cécille*, but there was great shouting on board, and lanterns were being waved, and the ship was not firing.

"Mr. Tompion wishes me to say, sir, that he believes the

enemy has struck," said Echo, suddenly appearing and saluting Bowling.

The captain, with a great effort, dragged himself on to the bridge, and gazed for a moment, but not at the *Cécille*.

"Struck or not struck," he said to Maintruck, as he staggered down again, "I don't care. The others are coming up. We have not finished this business yet." And regaining his chair, into which he sank from sheer weakness, he cried through the scuttle, "That will do! Helm amidships! Full speed!"

The *Mary Rose*, now heading nearly west, passed the *Cécille*, on board of which the shouting and waving of lights continued, and quickly sighted the *Alger* approaching on the port bow, but at a considerable distance. This distance, however, rapidly decreased. "Concentrate your fire again, Mr. Tompion," shouted Bowling, "and let this one have it, like the other, at five hundred yards." And he held on, still keeping the enemy about four points on his port bow. The Frenchman evidently intended to do his best to ram, for he came up gallantly, not even firing until he was well within a thousand yards. In this position only two of the *Mary Rose's* 9·4-in. and two of her 4·7-in. guns would bear, but at the right distance they were fired, and at the next instant Bowling ported his helm, and so brought his after port guns to bear. They, too, were fired, but they did not stop the *Alger*, which pluckily began to follow the privateer's motions and to circle in pursuit of her, firing furiously at the same time. The work

was getting warm. Men flung up their arms and fell forward on their faces. Splinters flew. Two shells, in rapid succession, burst below. Maintruck staggered sideways, and collapsed under the break of the poop.

"Stand by to fire the stern torpedo," shouted Bowling hoarsely. "Full speed astern starboard engine! Full speed ahead port engine!"

This order and "Port helm!" brought the ship round so rapidly that the *Alger*, turning less quickly, passed under the privateer's stern. The distance was barely two cables, when Bowling, seeing the enemy's broadside fully exposed, gave the word. Fifteen seconds later the Whitehead struck its mark, and as Bowling heard the explosion he sank senseless on deck.

CHAPTER IX.

A "GLORIOUS FIRST OF JUNE."

MR. BINNACLE took command of the privateer. The *Alger*, which was evidently sinking fast, was now aflame with lights, and all firing from her had ceased. The men clustered on her decks were shouting wildly for help. Some even leapt into the water, and strove to reach the *Mary Rose* by swimming. Regardless, for the moment, of everything except the saving of life, Binnacle ordered the boats to be got out, but soon learnt that he had not a single boat of any kind which would float. In the meantime the *Troude* was warily coming up, with the obvious intention of continuing the action. Binnacle's decision was soon taken. He steamed round the *Alger* so as to place her between him and his new enemy, and when he was as close to her as he dared venture, hailed her.

"I have no boats," he cried. "Signal to your consort to help you. I won't interfere unless she attacks me. God preserve you!" And then, pretty confident that his permission would be gladly taken advantage of, he steamed back to where the *Cécille* lay motionless on the water a mile or more to the eastward.

"THEIR WHITE SNOW-WAVES BETRAYED THEM."

"SUDDENLY A ROCKET SHOT UP."

The *Achille*, it was now plain, had struck, and as the *Mary Rose* approached her, she hailed to say so. Binnacle replied, ordering her to send a boat, and in five minutes a boat left her side.

The officer who came in her was a grey-headed captain in full dress. He climbed on deck with some little difficulty, for his left arm was bound up in a sling; but although, as his slit sleeve showed, he had put on his full uniform after he had received his wound, and although he was in considerable pain, there were about him no other traces of having been in action. His face was clean, his linen was spotless, and his hair and whiskers were carefully brushed. The side was piped for him, and, hat in hand, he stood with bowed head asking in broken English for the captain.

Binnacle moved forward, a great contrast in every way to his visitor. The latter was clean, and almost spruce. The former had his clothes burned full of holes, and wet blood upon his cuffs, while his face was black, his hands were dirty, his head was bare, and his hair was badly singed. "Have I the honour of speaking to the captain of this ship?" asked the Frenchman in a voice which, though distinct, trembled with emotion.

"The captain is wounded, sir," rejoined Binnacle; "but I am in command."

"Perhaps, nevertheless, you will conduct me to the captain."

Bowling lay near the break of the poop, where Dr. Rhubarb was attending to him. He had not received any further in-

jury of importance. He had merely fainted from the effects of excitement acting upon his already sorely injured frame, and he was now regaining his senses. Binnacle pointed him out to the Frenchman, who approached him. Bowling looked up, and, realising the situation, struggled to his feet and took off his cap. But that Mr. Nipcheese supported him he would, however, have again fallen.

"Sir," said the French captain, who had put his hat on the bitts, and who now tendered his sword, "my engines are disabled, half my crew are killed, and I have no choice but to surrender. It is a sad consolation for me to know that I surrender to an officer of your distinguished gallantry. Permit me to say that you have fought me splendidly, and have handled your ship to perfection. I do myself the honour of constituting myself your prisoner, and of begging you to assist my poor fellows."

He had prepared this little speech, no doubt, and had steeled himself to utter it. When he had finished it he burst into tears and sobbed like a child. Bowling, still dazed, grasped the proffered sword, and attempted to reply, but was too weak to speak aloud. He could only beckon Binnacle to him and whisper: "Poor chap! Tell him to keep it, Binnacle. And do you carry on." Then once more he fainted.

It was arranged that the prize should be towed to Malta, unless, indeed, her engines could in the meantime be rendered serviceable, and unless the other vessels of the enemy endeavoured to interfere. But it soon appeared that the enemy

had no further stomach for fighting. The *Troude*, lying close to the *Alger*, was busily engaged in saving the ship's company of that ill-starred craft, which, before daylight, but not until all her people had been removed, gave a great roll to port, and pitching down by the bows, sank; whereupon the *Troude* steamed slowly away to the westward. In the interval Lieutenant Tripper had gone to take charge of the *Cécille*.

He found on board of her a perfectly awful state of affairs. Tompion had worked his guns only too well. The *Mary Rose*, with her concentrated broadside, had raked the great French cruiser fore and aft along nearly the whole length of her spacious decks; and by that one terrible discharge had not only killed or wounded 239 out of the 486 officers and men in the *Cécille*, but had dismounted two out of six 6·4-in. and four out of ten 5·4-in. guns; had carried away the foremast close to the deck, had demolished the forward funnel, and had literally filled up the open engine-room hatch with heavy *débris* from the foremast, the funnel, the fore-bridge, the boats, and the deck structures. The *débris* had choked and jammed the engines, and had so caused a general dislocation of the machinery. Two out of the three 9·4-in. shells had, it appeared, burst high up under the upper deck, and, besides tearing it open and covering the upper deck from end to end with splinters, had spread equal devastation on the lower deck, which was in places actually covered with the mangled and unrecognisable remains of brave men, and across which a wash of blood swept from side to side as the ship rolled. Tripper was

not squeamish. He had already seen some frightful sights in his own ship. But when he first went down to the *Cécille's* lower deck and experienced the horrible warm odour of the slaughter-house there; when, lantern in hand, he saw the splashed brains, the fragments of flesh, and the trickling streams of crimson; and when he heard the sounds that filled that den of terrors, he could barely force himself to remain. Here a 6·4-in. gun, weighing about four tons, had been torn from its mounting and flung upon three men, whom it had crushed out of all shape of human kind; there again a body cut in half lay across the gangway and oozed blood and horror. The new war methods may not be more cruel, nor even more fatal than the old, but they are a hundred times more fearful.

When matters had been put a little ship-shape on board the prize, and when some of the prisoners had been removed from her, and a small prize crew, which could hardly be spared, sent on board from the *Mary Rose*, a hawser was passed to the *Cécille*, and she was taken in tow.

Malta was about 750 miles steam from the scene of action, and had the privateer been alone, she would probably have reached Valetta Harbour by six o'clock on the evening of Saturday, the 16th. With the French cruiser astern of her she did not, however, reach it until twenty-four hours later, and even then she made very good time, seeing that she covered the distance at an average speed of over 11·3 knots. This she could not have done had not a favourable wind

sprung up, and had not the prize been able to slightly help her by hoisting a certain amount of sail.

During the passage Bowling picked up wonderfully, as did also Maintruck, Day, and Salthorse, and when, late on Sunday afternoon, the *Mary Rose* and the *Cécille* dropped anchor, by direction from the Admiral, off Point Bichi, all four of the wounded officers were not only on deck, but on their legs. For a fortnight Malta had been almost cut off from the rest of the world. A few Italian small craft had run across from Syracuse and Alicata, but they had busied themselves with the bringing of supplies rather than of news. All the cables were cut; a torpedo boat, which had been sent for orders to Messina, had not returned, and was supposed to have been captured; and a considerable French force, including the iron-clads *Richelieu*, *Friedland*, *Bayard*, and *Duguesclin*, and the cruisers *Milan*, *Jean Bart*, and *Faucon*, having been observed off the island, it was not difficult to account for the non-arrival of the duplicate dispatches which, as Bowling knew, had been sent overland from London at about the time of his own departure from the Tyne.

The arrival of the two ships caused a scene of the wildest enthusiasm. Within a few minutes the harbour, as if by magic, became crowded with boats, the occupants of which seemed to be never tired of staring at the blue ensign which floated above the tricolour at the *Cécille's* peak, or of examining the various marks of rough usage with which both vessels were liberally covered, and ever and anon some excitable

"THE 'TROUBS' WAS WARILY COMING UP.

"ON BOARD THE 'CECILLE' A PERFECTLY AWFUL STATE OF AFFAIRS WAS FOUND."

person on the water started rounds of cheering for the mysterious British cruiser, and for her gallant but unknown captain, officers, and complement.

The warships in harbour or in dock were the *Colossus*, *Sanspareil*, *Polyphemus*, and *Surprise*, besides the half-dismantled *Orion* and the *Victoria*, which was, for the time, absolutely unserviceable. Their boats came off to the strangers, and many of those who came in them were rather astonished to find on the *Mary Rose's* quarter-deck old shipmates, or at least old friends. The Admirals, also, too anxious to be able to stand strictly on their dignity, came off, the Mediterranean Commander-in-Chief in the *Sanspareil's* galley, and the Admiral-Superintendent in his steam launch. To the latter officer Bowling had the satisfaction of personally handing Sir Humphrey Thornbeigh's dispatch. Warm indeed were the congratulations which he received from all ranks when, in as few words as possible, and very modestly, he told his story.

"By Gad, Bowling," said the Admiral-Superintendent, a little man, who habitually jumped about as if he were treading upon hot bricks, "to be able to say that I had done what you have done, I would willingly surrender all this gold lace. Damme, sir; if they don't make a K.C.B. of you, I shall leave the service in disgust—when the war is over, of course."

"I'm more desirous to get a little of the gold lace, sir," laughed Bowling. "If they will give me my three stripes I shall be content, although that would involve my leaving the ship."

The two Admirals, as soon as they had satisfied a little of their natural curiosity concerning what Bowling could tell them, took possession, without any ceremony, of his cabin, and in privacy opened Sir Humphrey's dispatch. It was externally addressed to the Admiral-Superintendent, because Sir Humphrey, when he wrote it, was of course ignorant as to the whereabouts of the Mediterranean Commander-in-Chief, but it was internally addressed to the senior officer at Malta. It directed him to spare no efforts in getting ready for service as many vessels as possible, and then, taking command, to proceed to sea with them; running as little risk as might be, yet if necessary at all hazards. The object to be strictly kept in view was to make a rendezvous at one o'clock a.m. on Monday, June 1st, five miles south of Europa Point; and to effect this everything was to be sacrificed. "At the place and hour mentioned," continued the dispatch, "I purpose to concentrate all available forces from Malta, from Gibraltar, and from home, in order, if the French Fleet be still off the Rock, to annihilate it; and if that Fleet be gone elsewhere, to resume our command of the Mediterranean, and then to follow the enemy, should they have left it for the Atlantic or the Channel."

The dispatch—which was a long one—need not be further quoted. It contained plain directions as to the manner in which each squadron was to approach the rendezvous; a special code of signals; and minute instructions as to the course to be pursued in almost every conceivable combination of circumstances; and it concluded with the expression of a

hope that the senior officer would treat Captain Bowling of the *Mary Rose*, letter of marque, with favourable consideration, and would utilise the services which Captain Bowling, Sir Humphrey felt sure, would be very eager to render to Her Majesty's officers.

From that moment, Bowling, although he had no rank, held a unique and exceptional position. He was taken into the councils of the Admirals to an extent to which even the oldest post-captains were not; his advice was not merely asked, but frequently followed, and he was offered every facility which the dockyard officials, without prejudice to the naval service, could supply towards refitting his ship and bringing her sorely reduced complement once more up to the mark. Of men there was no lack, for many large merchant ships, including several vessels of the P. and O. Company's fleet, were laid up in harbour. Indeed it was found possible to refit and re-man the *Cécille* as well as the *Mary Rose*. The former was re-named *Rose*, and the Commander-in-Chief suggested that, unless Bowling very much desired to keep her under his orders, she should be purchased into the Navy and officered by naval officers. Bowling preferred the latter course; whereupon the Admiral assumed the responsibility of the bargain, and the prize having been duly condemned, he gave Bowling bills for the very large amount at which she was officially valued.

In pursuit of the orders from home, Malta Dockyard, which had been busy enough before the *Mary Rose's* arrival, became busier than ever. The *Sanspareil* was in No. 4 Dock, the

Colossus in Somerset Dock, and the *Polyphemus* in No. 2—Inner Dock—so that the other vessels of large size had to make shift to repair alongside; but labour being plentiful, and the Admiral-Superintendent having with foresight erected some temporary but very powerful shears, it was found possible to lighten both the *Mary Rose* and the *Rose* sufficiently to enable their underwater injuries, which were not extensive, to be got at and set to rights. The Commander-in-Chief decided to sail on the evening of Wednesday, the 27th; but he did not allow his determination to become known to anyone except his brother Admiral and Bowling. Everyone, however, knew quite well that exciting events were in the air. Such matters seem to have mysterious tongues of their own, and to be unable to keep silence concerning themselves, even although they do not always blab of particular details.

In the battle off Toulon both the 111-ton guns of the *Sanspareil* had been put, or rather had put themselves, out of action, but as at Malta there were neither reserve guns nor appliances for, in so short a time, lifting out the old ones, they were obliged to be left in the ship. The accident was a very serious one, for it condemned the most important portion of the great vessel's armament to inactivity, and deprived the craft of the whole of her bow fire. This being so, the Admiral, though very unwilling to desert her, felt it incumbent upon him to haul down his flag in her, and to transfer it to the *Colossus*. He even went so far as to question whether he should allow the *Sanspareil* to go to sea at all, and only at the

urgent solicitation of her captain did he at length consent to permit her to accompany the squadron when it should leave harbour. In the meantime, and in order to neutralise to some slight extent the ship's absence of heavy guns forward, he succeeded in getting a couple of 4·7-in. quick-firing guns mounted behind shields on the spar deck abreast of the funnels, so that they were partially protected by the otherwise useless turret, and could fire over it.

The ten days that were spent by the *Mary Rose* at Malta went very quickly. Work went on by night with as little interruption as by day, and upon the morning of the 27th all the vessels with which the Admiral intended to sail had hauled out from their docks and jetties, and lay at anchor in harbour, fully coaled, and in all respects ready for sea. During these ten days very little news of a trustworthy nature dribbled in from the outer world. It became known, however, that a further attempt by the French against the ships collected at Spithead had been repulsed without serious loss on the British side; but that, on the other hand, several open towns on the south coast had been bombarded by French cruisers, after having declined to pay ransom; that the Channel trade, so far as Great Britain was concerned, was almost at a standstill; and that in some parts of the country bloody bread riots had occurred, while in London itself there had been much disorder, owing to the supposed undue dilatoriness of the Board of War, and to the great rise in prices. Sir Humphrey Thornbeigh had been burnt in effigy in Trafalgar Square, and had

immediately afterwards ridden out of the Admiralty courtyard, addressed the crowd from on horseback, and been cheered by the rabble as he returned. It became known also that, as late as the 22nd, the nightly bombardment of Gibraltar was being continued, and that the French were pretty confident of reducing the place by the end of the month, as they had improvised some floating batteries, armed with mortars of the largest calibre, throwing mélinite shells, which were excessively destructive.

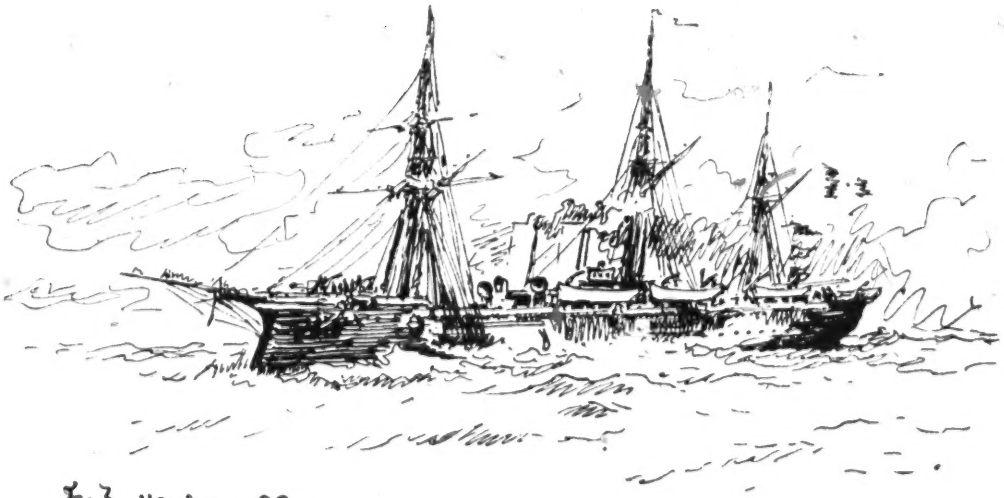
Bowling was almost well, and, but for the loss of his eye, was very little the worse for having been in action. Hard work, indeed, seemed to be the best restorative for both him and his officers.

The 27th of May was a magnificent day. The sky was clear and of the deepest blue, and the gentle breeze was barely sufficient to blow out the bunting of the ships in harbour and the Union Jacks of the forts on shore. At ten o'clock the Admiral suddenly signalled for steam to be got up ready for 12 knots at five o'clock; at half-past four, having already unmoored, he signalled "Prepare to weigh," and at five he weighed and led his ships out. Earlier in the day he had sent torpedo boats to scout all round the island, and, as they returned reporting no signs of the enemy, he did not hesitate to put to sea before dark. It subsequently appeared that the French vessels, which for a time had formed a squadron of observation off Malta, had, two days earlier, been ordered to reinforce the Fleet off the Rock, preparatory to the general and,

as was hoped, the final bombardment, the French Admiralty having made up its mind that the ships in Malta were too badly damaged to venture much for some time to come, and too weak to dare to come out, even if they were patched up. Only a single cruiser had been left to watch, and she had, it turned out, gone off in chase of a vessel which she took to be British, but which was really the Italian corvette *Cristoforo Colombo*, bound for Palermo. The excellent Italian captain did not deem it to be his duty to enlighten his French "opposite number," and steamed gaily away at 14 knots without answering the signals which the cruiser made to him. He was at length overhauled, and he then made, of course, most courteous explanations; but by that time the British squadron was at sea, and well on its way to the westward. When the cruiser returned to her station it was too dark for her to discover that the bird had flown. Next morning she did discover it, and then she pelted off to Toulon with the news, and received from the Commander-in-Chief there a sound rating for having been lured away by an Italian, who, as the Admiral chose to put it, was "only an Englishman in disguise." There may have been an atom of truth in this assertion, for throughout the war the Italians certainly, although they always spoke French with the greatest politeness, spoke it, as used to be said at the time, with a decidedly English accent. In other words, they scarcely disguised their sympathies, and would, upon the smallest encouragement, have openly declared them. Happily for all parties, they managed to

preserve for themselves that greatest of blessings—peace.

In the days of sailing ships pre-concerted action between fleets or even between single vessels was difficult and precarious. It was not, for example, of much use for the Admiralty to base important plans upon the junction at a particular time and in a particular place of two forces. It might be absolutely impossible for one or both of the forces to reach the spot within a month of the specified hour,—impossible, not because of the occurrence of unforeseen accidents, but simply because of the normal and natural conditions under which the work had to be done. If the wind did not blow, the ship did not go. But in modern days ships are independent of winds, tides, and currents. Mail steamers run, and have run for years, between points thousands of miles apart with almost the punctuality of railway trains; and if it were desirable that at eight o'clock in the morning of every Monday in the year a vessel should leave New York, and that, at eight o'clock in the morning of the following Wednesday week she should drop anchor in the Cove of Cork, there is no doubt whatever that in fifty cases out of every fifty-two, the programme could be literally carried out. If, in short, a slight margin over and above the time actually necessary for the voyage in moderate weather be allowed, ships can, barring unforeseen and unpreventible accidents, now move about with something akin to absolute punctuality. This fact lies at the root of all modern naval strategy, and at the root, also, of much of modern naval tac-



F. J. Waud 92

THE "CRISTOFORO COLOMBO."

ties; but it had never before been so frankly recognised and so boldly utilised as it was for the combined operations which were planned at Whitehall to be carried out on the 1st of June in the Strait of Gibraltar.

The gallant Admiral whose flag flew in the *Colossus* took care to keep a certain amount of time in hand from the beginning. At twelve knots, Gibraltar is, as nearly as possible, ninety-six hours' steam from Malta. The rendezvous was for one o'clock a.m. on June 1st; therefore in order to keep it, a squadron steaming the whole distance at twelve knots, with a little speed in hand, was not obliged to leave Malta until one a.m. on the morning of May 28th. But the Admiral prudently allowed himself an additional eight hours; and thus, towards the end of his cruise, when he might reasonably expect to fall in with the enemy, he was able to go warily.

The last day was indeed an anxious time. To approach the African shore was to risk encountering French vessels on their way to or from Gibraltar and Algiers. To approach the Spanish shore, on the other hand, was to risk encountering French vessels on their way to or from Gibraltar and Toulon. Upon both routes men-of-war must necessarily be continually moving, Toulon being the repairing, and Algiers or Bizerta in all probability the coaling depôt for the hostile Fleet; and although the Admiral had come out to fight, he had come to fight in a particular place at a particular time, and not otherwise. In this difficulty the *Rose* was useful. Her French build and rig, and her general resemblance to other cruisers

F. E. de Martino
92

"IN THE LAST OF SAILING SHIPS"

which still flew the tricolour, rendered her, the Admiral felt, invaluable as a scout; and, as a matter of fact, in the early morning of the 31st she was able, without exciting suspicion, to warn the squadron of the vicinity of a French ironclad which, although she might have been captured, might also have fatally delayed the combined movements upon which the success of the entire scheme depended. The Admiral kept for the most part a course as equidistant as possible between Spain and Africa all that day, the order being *Colossus*, *Sans-pareil*, *Polyphemus*, and *Mary Rose*, in column of line ahead, with the *Rose* on the port and the *Surprise* on the starboard bow of the column at a distance of five miles. Bowling was treated almost exactly as one of the captains of the squadron, and obeyed signals, etc., just as they did; nor, owing to the good services which he had already done, was there the least trace of jealousy concerning him. Indeed, the squadron was proud of him.

The grand bombardment of Gibraltar began on the night between May 30th and May 31st. The French had previously collected for the purpose a fleet of twenty-five ironclads, inclusive of armoured coast-defence ships, ten floating batteries specially prepared, and numerous small unarmoured vessels, each mounting a single heavy gun. Attached to this force were two large squadrons of cruisers, one of which was disposed fan-wise at the Atlantic end, and the other at the Mediterranean end of the Straits, so as to give timely alarm in case of any threatened interference with what was going on at the

Rock. In fact, almost the whole available resource of the French Navy was concentrated for the occasion, it having been determined in Paris that—at all costs—Gibraltar must be made to fall. Many of the most enlightened French critics doubted the wisdom of this policy; and, among others, M. E. Weyl, the distinguished naval editor of *Le Yacht*. In the course of an article, which he published within a few hours after the scheme had been decided upon, he wrote:—

"We shall never deal an effective blow at the naval power of Britain by hurling ourselves against her fortresses. We have rightly made up our minds, for the present, to leave Malta alone. Why not deal in a similar manner with Gibraltar? And why not consistently pursue those principles which, in the ardour of the moment and before the theorists had time to make themselves heard, we put in force off Toulon on the glorious day of the 28th of April? Gibraltar, like Malta, stands or falls with the British Navy. On the other hand, we may possess ourselves both of Gibraltar and of Malta without materially or permanently diminishing the power of our opponents on the sea. It is our duty, rather, to keep a single eye on the Navy of the enemy. If we destroy that, we gain everything; if we do not destroy it, all our other gains will be vain and illusory. Let us, then, implore the Ministry to alter its plans while there is yet time. Let us seek for a decisive action on the ocean. Already, in the past, Gibraltar has been the scene of one of the most costly of naval follies. Surely we are not about to deliberately repeat the stupidity of

1782? To attack Gibraltar with this huge force is to court disaster."

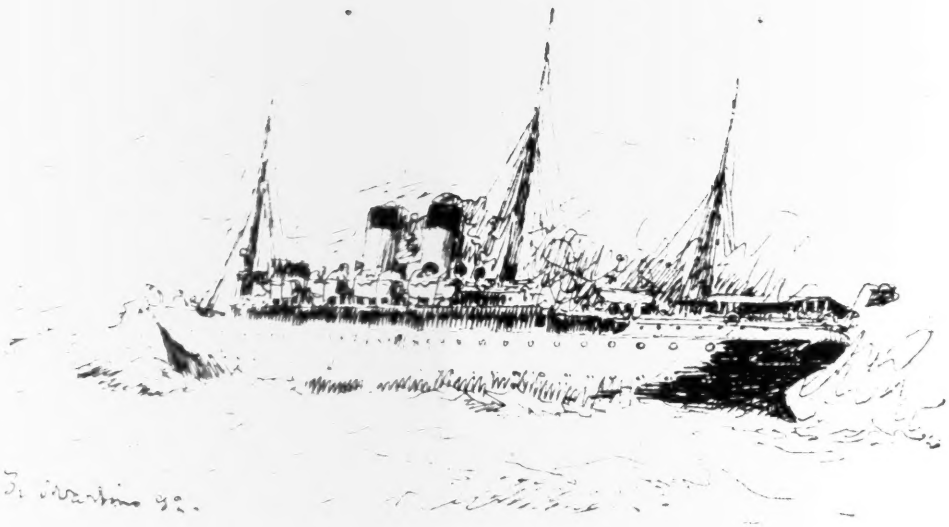
But the French Ministry did not listen to the advice of M. Weyl, and of those who, with him, were students of the great principles enunciated by Captain Mahan. The official mind could not resist the specious reasoning: "If you place the tricolour on Gibraltar you become the doorkeeper of the Mediterranean;" and so, as has been said, the grand bombardment, began. It was resumed on the night of May 31st—June 1st, and fearful indeed upon forts, towns, and rock itself was the effect of that unexampled fire. But for two nights only did it continue.

At dusk, on the evening of the 31st, the little squadron from Malta slowed down to nine knots, being then about fifty miles from the Gut of Gibraltar. Steam was, however, kept for full speed, and the Admiral signalled that, as soon as any French cruiser should be observed ahead, full speed should be put on, and that the squadron should thenceforward restrain its pace only by the best speed of the flagship. The *Surprise* and *Rose* were directed to fall back before the enemy, and to take station astern of the other vessels, and avoid engaging.

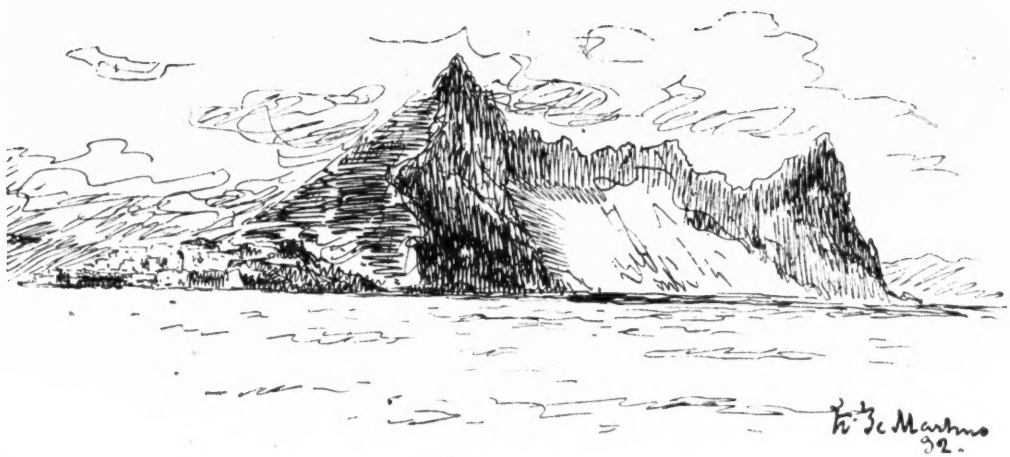
The incidents leading up to the battle off Toulon and to the passage of the Straits by the *Mary Rose* had been exciting; but they were far less so than the incidents which were now leading up to an action, the nature and results of which not one man of the thousands who were about to take part in it could form even the faintest idea of. Three separate forces

were moving independently upon the scene and towards the great French Fleet. None knew for certain how any one of the others was composed; none had any means of making sure that any one of the others would arrive at the right moment; and none knew either the strength or the disposition of the foe. Only afterwards did the world at large learn that the Fleet from Spithead consisted, so far as armoured ships were concerned, of two divisions—the first composed of the *Royal Sovereign* (flag), *Anson*, *Camperdown*, *Howe*, *Rodney*, *Aurora*, *Immortalité*, *Narcissus*, and *Galatea*, and the second of the *Hercules* (flag), *Triumph*, *Neptune*, *Audacious*, *Iron Duke*, *Superb*, *Northampton*, *Nelson*, and *Shannon*; that the *Trafalgar*, *Dreadnought*, and *Australia* issued from Gibraltar, and that from Malta came the *Colossus* (flag), *Sanspareil*, *Polyphemus*, and *Mary Rose*. The first Spithead and the Gibraltar and Malta divisions—fifteen ironclads in all—had orders to effect the junction at the rendezvous at one o'clock a.m. The second Spithead division, to which were attached an exceptional number of fast protected cruisers, had orders to make the same rendezvous forty minutes later, and had, in fact, left British waters two days earlier than the second division.

The arrangement seems to have been upon the whole a very prudent one. The second Spithead division was the weakest and slowest. Its numerous fast scouts would bring it, while on the passage, early information of the approach of an enemy, and would enable it, if necessary, to fall back upon the first and most fast and powerful division. On the other hand, the



AN ATLANTIC GREYHOUND.



"GIB."

first division, in conjunction with the modern ships from Malta and Gibraltar, would, if the French were still engaged at the Rock, bear the first brunt of the fight, and allow the second division in its wake to come fresh upon a partially disorganised and probably badly damaged foe. The weakness of the scheme, if weakness there were, lay in the fact that at the outset fifteen British ironclads might be opposed to twenty-five French. But it must be recollected that while nearly all these British ships were vessels of very large size and modern design, at least half the French ships were smaller and older, and several of them, as, for example, the *Colbert*, *Richelieu*, *Bayard*, and *La Galissonnière*, were partially built of wood. Even the ships of the second Spithead division were most of them, vessel for vessel, nearly equal to the average of the French battleships off Gibraltar.

It is hopeless to attempt to describe in detail the episodes of a great Fleet action. The best general description of the battle of Gibraltar is contained in the official dispatch which was afterwards addressed by the Commander-in-Chief to the Chief Director of Fleets, and which is here copied :—

"*Royal Sovereign*, Gibraltar Bay,
"*June 1st.*

"SIR,—I have the honour to inform you that it has pleased God to bless Her Majesty's arms with signal success, and that the combined movements which were directed to be carried out by the Fleet under my command, and by the squadrons at

Malta and Gibraltar respectively, have been performed, and have to-day resulted in the gaining of a victory which, while it will, I trust, add a ray of glory to Her Majesty's crown, will also, I pray, tend in no small degree to benefit the Empire and to bring to a speedy conclusion the present unhappy war.

"The second division of the Spithead Fleet, composed of H.M. ships mentioned in the margin, sailed from Spithead on the 24th of May. The first division, with my flag in the *Royal Sovereign*, followed, in pursuance of your instructions, on the 26th. Neither division encountered on the passage any force of the enemy, and on the 31st, at noon, I communicated with and passed the second division, and proceeded at 13 knots for the mouth of the Strait. Shortly before 11 p.m., at which hour we could distinctly hear that the bombardment of Gibraltar was being vigorously continued, my cruisers, the night being clear and brilliant, sighted the cruisers of the French Fleet about six miles ahead, and soon afterwards exchanged shots with some of the most advanced of them. The French cruisers presently withdrew, and I increased speed to 14 knots, formed my command into quarter line, and disposed my cruisers on the quarters and at the rear of the division, with orders to them to expose themselves as little as possible, to keep out of the way of the second division as it came up forty minutes later, and, generally, to be prepared to render assistance to the battleships. The French Fleet, upon receiving intelligence of our approach, must have relinquished the bombardment, and in a formation of which I could not learn the

THE "ROYAL SOVEREIGN."

nature, steamed leisurely to the eastward. At this time we had not ourselves sighted it, but a little before one o'clock, when we were already nearly abreast of Europa Point, and when the *Trafalgar*, *Dreadnought*, and *Australia* were visible coming out of the Bay, we discovered the enemy about seven miles ahead, fiercely engaged with the squadron from Malta. This consisted only of the *Colossus*, *Sanspareil*, *Polyphemus*, and *Surprise* of Her Majesty's Navy, but attached to it, and obeying the orders of the Vice-Admiral, were the *Mary Rose*, armoured privateer, commanded by Mr. Thomas Bowling, late a lieutenant of the Royal Navy, and the *Rose*, late *Cécille*, a prize which was captured from the French Navy by the *Mary Rose* in a very gallant manner on the 14th ult., and which had been purchased into the service and manned at Malta by the Vice-Admiral upon his own responsibility, a course which I venture to hope will meet with approval. The Malta squadron was handled with conspicuous ability, but, ere I could come up with the enemy, was, I regret to say, very severely mauled, the *Sanspareil* being rammed by two ships, and sinking with her colours flying and guns firing, and the other vessels being much damaged and losing heavily. The squadron, however, broke through the French Fleet, which followed it, maintaining a running action until I was able to interfere. The enemy was by that time in somewhat confused formation; and my division in its original order, but reinforced, passed through it with less loss than might have been expected, and then altered course sixteen points together

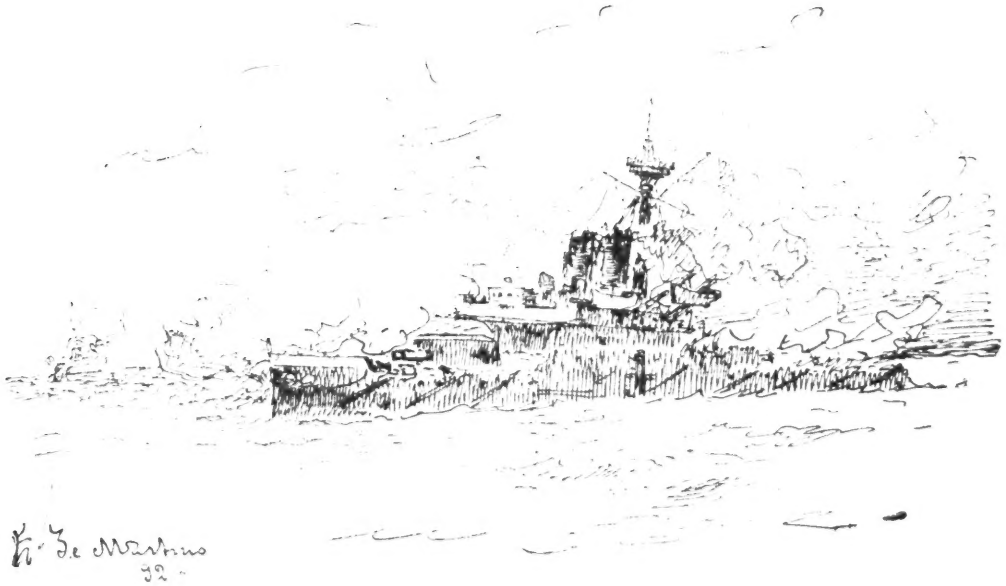
and returned, executing the whole movement at full speed, and with a precision which I have never seen equalled. Unhappily in this second passage the *Howe* became unmanageable, and was torpedoed, rammed, and sunk. I am proud to be able to report that, except the vessels which received damage to their machinery or steering gear, and which were thus obliged to quit the line, all my ships preserved their stations, and that, so far as the British Fleet was concerned, there was nothing in the shape of a chance *melée*. Having twice passed through the French, and perceiving that they were falling into disorder, I led the way through once more, so as to place them between my own ships and the second division. In this passage I had the misfortune to lose the *Dreadnought*, which, after joining from Gibraltar, had taken station in the line, and which was blown up by the concentration of the depressed heavy gun fire of three French ships upon her low deck. After the third passage the enemy ceased to manœuvre as a fleet, but his single ships fought with great determination. As soon as I observed the approach of the second division I made the signal, 'Ships will engage the enemy independently,' and also that for close action. The latter, however, I presently annulled, it rapidly becoming clear that for a vessel to obey it was to unnecessarily expose herself to the French torpedoes. I made instead a signal ordering the ships of the first division to keep to westward of the enemy, and to engage as much as possible beyond torpedo range. It was now 1.45 a.m., and the second division had

opened fire. I had ceased to have any doubts as to the general results of the action, but I was scarcely prepared for the effect which the arrival of the fresh ships had upon our opponents. The French had lost terribly, and were thoroughly disorganised; and when they found themselves placed between two fires, and with retreat cut off in both directions by forces of the exact strength of which they were no doubt ignorant, they evidently lost heart. So bright was the moonlight that we could distinctly see some of them strike their flags. Upon this, using the electric semaphore, I directed the Vice-Admiral in command of the second division to send his torpedo gun-vessels into the French Fleet. With admirable alacrity these little craft obeyed the order. The French, whose cruisers and torpedo boats were nearly all to the eastward of us, and were easily kept at a distance by the fire of our quick-firing guns, made some considerable resistance, and, I am sorry to say, sank two of our gun-vessels. But when three of their number had been torpedoed, the rest, to my great relief, surrendered, and were before three o'clock taken possession of by the ironclads of the second division. The cruisers of the combined Fleet were meanwhile dispatched in general chase of the cruisers of the enemy, and as I write are beginning to return. So far as I can at present ascertain, they have destroyed four and captured two of the cruisers which were attached to the French Fleet, but several reports have yet to come in. Concerning the losses on both sides in armoured ships I can inform you more exactly. We went into

action with, in all, twenty-four vessels, including the *Mary Rose*, of this class. Of these, four are sunk or blown up, two have had to be run ashore to save them from sinking, and seven are so badly damaged as to be totally unfit for future service for some time to come. The enemy went into action with twenty-five armoured ships, and of this number she has not preserved one. Fourteen have been sunk or blown up; three are ashore; and eight, all more or less damaged, are now at anchor here under my orders. As to the losses in officers and men, they are, I am pained to inform you, exceedingly serious. My own flagship has over 400 killed and wounded; and many other ships, especially those of the first division and of the Malta squadron, have suffered heavily in proportion. The names of the ships lost and captured are set forth in the margin, and in an enclosure are such detailed statements as have yet reached me of the loss in officers and men.

"All ranks behaved in a manner which merits my warmest approbation, and which is worthy of the finest traditions of our country and of the service. In a future dispatch I hope to render to individuals that particular meed of praise which as yet I lack the necessary materials for fairly apportioning. Of Mr. Bowling of the *Mary Rose*, whose situation both before and during the action has been an exceptional one, I cannot delay speaking. To do so would, I am convinced, be to hurt the feelings of every officer and man under my command. On the 14th ult. he, being at the time entrusted with duplicate dispatches to the Admiral-Superintendent at Malta, ran through the

French Fleet into the Mediterranean, sinking the cruiser *Davout*, and badly damaging the ironclad *Terrible* and the cruiser *Tage*. In this gallant exploit he was badly wounded. On the following day, pursued by the cruisers *Cécille*, *Alger*, and *Troude*, he took the first, which is now H.M.S. *Rose*, sank the second, and only permitted the third to escape because she had taken on board the survivors of the second. He was again injured. In the action of this morning he behaved with a courage and coolness to which I cannot do justice, passing four times through the French Fleet, handling his ship in the most magnificent manner, and, I regret to have to add, being once more severely wounded. It will be within your recollection that a month ago the name of Mr. Bowling was removed from the list of Her Majesty's Navy. I venture respectfully to represent that the Royal Navy would be greatly honoured by having it restored, though in what rank I do not venture to suggest. I merely, with all the urgency which I can attach to my words, beg that the magnificent services of Mr. Bowling and of his officers—nearly all of whom are retired from the Royal Navy—may be recognised in a manner that will partially repay the country's great indebtedness to him and to them. In thus specially mentioning Mr. Bowling, who, on account of his wounds, goes home in the *Surprise*—his own ship being on shore badly damaged—I am acting not only in accordance with my own promptings, but also in accordance with the wishes of, I believe, every officer and man in the Fleet which to-day has had the happiness to gain for Her Majesty a complete and conclusive victory."



"I HAD THE MISFORTUNE TO LOSE THE 'DREADNOUGHT.'"

CHAPTER X.

"HOME AND BEAUTY."

M.S. *Surprise* left Gibraltar at noon on the day of the victory of the "Glorious First of June," and, steaming at 14 knots in very favourable weather, dropped anchor in Plymouth Sound at about breakfast time on the 5th.

On the passage, Bowling, who in the height of the action had received a ball from a Hotchkiss revolving gun that had shattered the bone of his left arm just above the elbow, was obliged to have the arm amputated; but the operation was perfectly successful, and his other wounds, which, though numerous, were slight, rapidly mended. The ship was little better than a floating ambulance full of wounded officers, and, upon her arrival, she immediately discharged all of them to the Royal Hospital. Bowling, however, not being a naval officer, was provisionally retained on board as a guest of the captain, whose cabin he shared. The captain himself went at once by special train to London with his dispatches, leaving his wounded guest in charge of the first lieutenant and the surgeon.

Bowling was doubly a hero at Plymouth. He had already brought thither two very valuable prizes, the *Duguay Trouin*

and the *Normandie*, and the fame of his exploits in the Mediterranean was rapidly disseminated throughout the Three Towns as soon as communications were opened between the ship and the shore. Though unable to sit up, he sent to Plymouth for a short-hand writer, to whom he dictated, for transmission to *The Times*, a full but modest account of his cruise. He was interrupted more than once, while engaged upon this duty, by visitors who came off to see him and to offer their congratulations; but he succeeded in finishing it before evening, and in getting it telegraphed to London in plenty of time for Saturday morning's paper. On that day Sir Taffrail and Miss Stormer arrived, the latter, upon receipt of the news of Bowling's return wounded, having obliged her father—who indeed did not need much persuasion—to take her where, even if she could not attend upon her lover, she could at least be near him. The Admiral alone came on board in the afternoon, and was suffered to see the invalid. But the old sailor was so violent in his congratulations, and betrayed such anxiety to talk, that he had to be forcibly removed in the interests of the patient. Using extremely uncomplimentary language to the surgeon who personally executed the unpleasant office, he was handed down to his boat, but in the evening he returned.

The surgeon, having heard his voice, met him on the quarter-deck. "You really must not go below, Sir Taffrail," said that officer; "I have Captain Brace's strict directions to prevent Mr. Bowling from being unduly excited by visitors, and he is now exceedingly fatigued."

"And who the devil is Captain Brace, sir?" demanded the Admiral, with an angry stamp on the deck.

"Captain Brace is the captain of this ship, Sir Taffrail, and permit me to beg of you not to stamp in that manner."

"Pish! nonsense!" returned the fiery Admiral. "I know better, sir. I know who is captain of this ship, sir, and I do not require to be instructed by you, sir."

At this crisis the first lieutenant came up. "What Dr. Blister says is perfectly true, Sir Taffrail; and I am really afraid that our conversation here will be very agitating to Mr. Bowling."

"I am going to see him, damme," asserted the Admiral, with another stamp, "and if anyone tries to prevent me, gentlemen, by Gad, I'll—I'll—yes, gentlemen, damme, I will." And he walked aft to the cabin.

Bowling looked up wearily.

"I've come off," said the Admiral, "to tell you about your friend Brace. They have promoted him. Wait, I'll read you the telegram, my boy."

He leisurely put on his spectacles, pulled two or three pink papers from his pocket, and from one of them read: "'Admiralty, June 6.—The following promotion has been made. Commander Ernest William Brace, who yesterday arrived at Plymouth with dispatches from the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet now at Gibraltar, to be Captain in her Majesty's Fleet.'"

"I'm very glad to hear it," said Bowling; "but of course it is only what one expected."

"What one expected: No, it isn't what one expected. I didn't expect, and I don't care. Is there anything else that you expect, eh?"

"They'll promote all the commanders and first lieutenants, I hope."

"Bowling, my boy, you're a fool. Listen to this." And selecting another pink paper, he read: "'Admiralty, June 6.—Her Majesty has been pleased to restore Mr. Thomas Bowling, late a Lieutenant in Her Majesty's Fleet, to his former rank and seniority as a Lieutenant.'"

Bowling's white face flushed with pleasure. "Thank you, Sir Taffrail," he said; "that is good news, indeed."

"Well, I don't think so," said the Admiral. "No, damme, I don't think so at all. But look here: there's Mary Rose alongside, and if you'd like to see her, by Gad, no one shall prevent my bringing her in. You have only to say the word, boy."

"How good of her to come. Why did you not bring her in? Please ring the bell, Sir Taffrail."

"No, I'll fetch her; there are sharks about. The beggars dared to try and stop me—to stop me!" and going out on deck, he presently returned leading his daughter, who was very pale and agitated, by the hand.

"Oh, Tom," she said, coming softly to him and seizing the hand which he held out to her and kissing it, "do forgive me, I couldn't keep away. I am so proud, Tom, and so happy. And oh, Tom, I do hope and pray that you are going on well, and won't be made worse by the good news."

"I haven't told him any good news," blurted out the Admiral; 'I've only told him that he is a lieutenant again, and about Brace."

"May I tell him, then, papa?" asked Mary.

"As if you could help telling him!" retorted the Admiral. "Yes, read the telegram."

Mary sat down, took the paper which her father gave her, and in a voice that was unsteady with happiness and emotion, read: "'Admiralty, June 6th.—The following promotions have been made: Lieutenant Thomas Bowling to be Commander in Her Majesty's Fleet. To date May 14th.'"

"Thank God!" ejaculated Bowling, whose colour came and went with every breath. "That's what I hoped."

"Hush!" continued Mary; "I haven't done. Listen. 'Commander Thomas Bowling to be Captain in Her Majesty's Fleet. To date June 1st.'"

"That's more than I dared to hope," said the invalid, almost inaudibly. "I'm afraid, dear, I really can't. . . . I can't. . . . bear. . . ."

He had fainted. Doctor Blister, who had been jealously watching at the door, entered quite angrily, and bustled out both visitors without much ceremony. Outside on the quarter-deck Mary sobbed and the Admiral swore: but Blister would not relent, and the visitors were handed down to their boat and obliged to pull off. Ere they did so, however, Mary squeezed a crumpled piece of paper into Blister's hand, and said, "I haven't told him all. Please tell him for me. He's to be a

baronet, too. And when may I come again? You'll find it all in the telegram. And do, please, take care of him."

Bowling's condition was not immediately improved by the excitement of that evening, and next day he was very feverish; but Blister had learnt by experience, and he permitted no further visits to be paid to his patient—until the latter was fully able to receive them. Mary, therefore, had to content herself with sending off twice daily to know how Bowling was getting on, and with supplying her gallant lover with more delicacies in the shape of jellies and fruits than could have been consumed by five post-captains in the enjoyment of the soundest health and the largest appetite. In a week Bowling was allowed to be moved to the shore, where Sir Taffrail had taken suitable rooms and engaged an excellent nurse. Three weeks later he was able to walk about, and before the end of July, *The Times* of one fine morning contained the announcement:

"Yesterday, at Plymouth, Captain Sir Thomas Bowling, Bart., R.N., the gallant capturer of the *Duguay Trouin* and *Cécille*, etc., was married to Mary Rose, only daughter of Admiral Sir Taffrail Stormer, G.C.B. The wedding, which was celebrated in the Dockyard church, was a naval one, and was attended by nearly every officer from the ships in port, and by many officers of the garrison. The bride was given away by her father; and Captain Maintruck, R.N., C.B., who, it will be remembered, was first lieutenant of the *Mary Rose*, and who, for his services in her under Sir Thomas Bowling,

was promoted to be Commander, acted as the bridegroom's best man. The presents, which were exceedingly numerous and valuable, included a silver gilt centre-piece from Her Majesty, a silver gilt bowl from the Commander-in-Chief at Devonport, a silver dessert service from the officers who were engaged in the Battle of Gibraltar, and a sword from the officers lately serving in the privateer *Mary Rose*. Late in the afternoon Sir Thomas and Lady Bowling left Plymouth on board Sir Taffrail Stormer's steam yacht *Beelzebub* for the Mediterranean, where, we understand, they will be, for a time, guests of the Admiral-Superintendent at Malta, Sir Thomas having been recommended to seek, for a short period, a warm climate. We are glad, however, to be able to say that the gallant baronet appeared to be in the best of health, and seemed to be in little need of such a change."

The same day's paper contained an account of the final signature of a treaty of peace between Great Britain and the French Republic. May that peace, so glorious to this country and yet so honourable to its defeated foe, never again be broken! And if, unhappily, it be broken again, may Britain be readier than she was at the beginning of the bloody two months' war to hold her own in every sea.

THE END.

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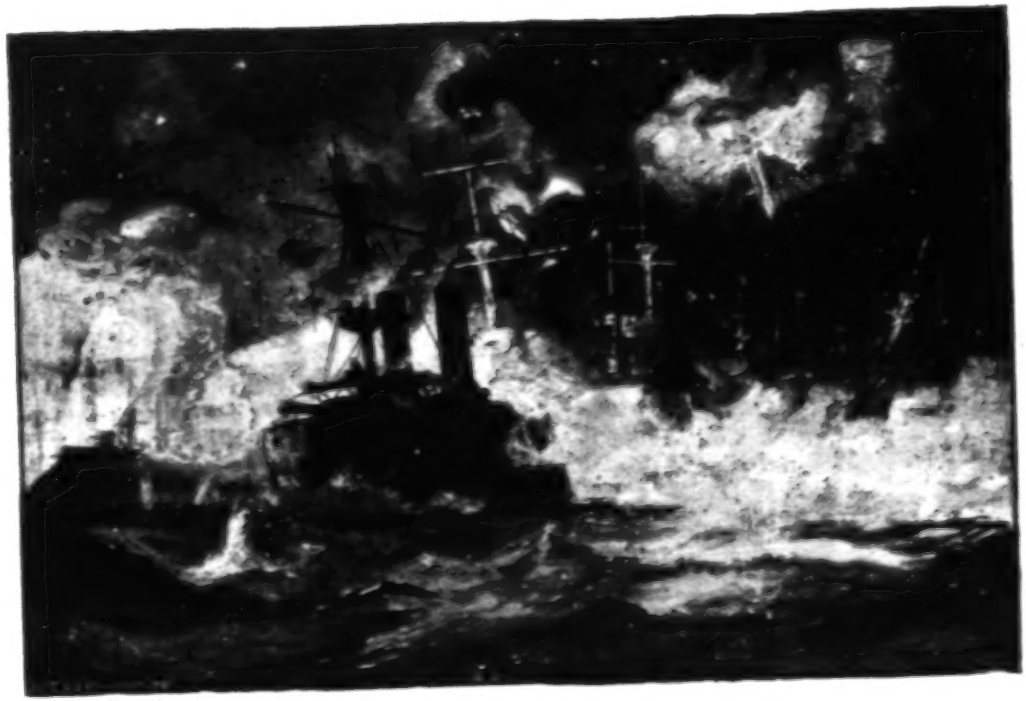

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